773

[See Category 173 for traditions concerning the origins of the various men's societies.]

When they reach the patch, if the crop is good, every one is glad. After the gathering, they all move away again after the buffalo. 249 796

Sometimes a man who was lazy, and had planted no tobacco, would go secretly to the patch, and pull a number of plants belonging to some one else, and hide them for his own use. Now, in these prayers that they offer, they do not ask for mercy for thieves. A man who had thus taken what did not belong to him would have a lizard appear to him in a dream, and then he would fall sick and die. The medicine men would know of all this, but they would not do anything. They would just let him die. 249 685 [796] [784] [787]

This tobacco was given us by the one who made us. 276 [824]

The Blackfoot cosmology is imperfect and vague, and I have been able to obtain nothing like a complete account of it, for I have found no one who appeared to know the story of the beginning of all things. 772

Some of the Blackfeet now say that originally there was a great womb, in which were conceived the progenitors of all animals now on earth. Among these was Old Man. As the time for their birth drew near, the animals used to quarrel as to which should be the first to be born, and one day, in a fierce struggle about this, the womb burst, and Old Man jumped first to the ground. For this reason, he named all the animals Nis-kum'-iks, Young Brothers; and they, because he was the first-born, called him Old Man. 539 773

There are several different accounts of the creation of the people by Old Man. One is that he married a female dog, and that their progeny were the first people. Others, and the ones most often told, have been given in the Old Man stories already related. 773

There is an account of the creation which is essentially an Algonquin myth, and is told by most of the tribes of this stock from the Atlantic to the Rocky Mountains, though the hero is variously named. [171]

5: Grinnell Q,T-5 (ca.1888) 1962
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000 hero is variously named. Here is the Blackfoot version of
• 773 it:—
539 In the beginning, all the land was covered with water, and Old Man and all the animals were floating around on a large raft. One day Old Man told the beaver to dive and try to bring up a little mud. The beaver went down, and was gone a long time, but could not reach the bottom. Then the loon tried, and the otter, but the water was too deep for them. At last the muskrat dived, and he was gone so long that they thought he had drowned, but he finally came up, almost dead, and when they pulled him on to the raft, they found, in one of his paws, a little mud. With this, Old Man formed the world, and afterwards he made the people.

773 This myth, while often related by the Blackfoot tribe,
[177] is seldom heard among the Bloods or Piegans. It is
uncertain whether all three tribes used to know it, but have
[184] forgotten it, or whether it has been learned in comparatively modern times by the Blackfeet from the Crees, with whom they have always had more frequent intercourse and a closer connection than the other two tribes.

773 There is also another version of the origin of death. When
539 Old Man made the first people, he gave them very strong bodies, and for a long time no one was sick. At last, a little child fell ill. Each day it grew weaker and weaker, and at last it fainted. Then the mother went to Old Man, and prayed him to do something for it.

"This," said Old Man, "will be the first time it has happened to the people. You have seen the buffalo fall to the ground when struck with an arrow. Their hearts stop beating, they do not breathe, and soon their bodies become cold. They are then dead. Now, woman, it shall be for you to decide whether death shall come to the people as well as to the other animals, or whether they shall live forever. Come now with me to the river."

5: Grinnell Q,T-5 (ca.1888) 1962
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When they reached the water's edge, Old Man picked up from the ground a dry buffalo chip and a stone. "Now, woman," he said, "you will tell me which one of these to throw into the water. If what I throw floats, your child shall live; the people shall live forever. If it sinks, then your child shall die, and all the people shall die, each one when his time comes."

The woman stood still a long time, looking from the stone to the buffalo chip, and from the chip to the stone. At last she said, "Throw the stone." Then Old Man tossed it into the river, and it sank to the bottom. "Woman," he cried, "go home; your child is dead." Thus, on account of a foolish woman, we all must die.

The shadow of a person, the Blackfeet say, is his soul. Northeast of the Sweet Grass Hills, near the international boundary line, is a bleak, sandy country called the Sand Hills, and there all the shadows of the deceased good Blackfeet are congregated. The shadows of those who in this world led wicked lives are not allowed to go there. After death, these wicked persons take the shape of ghosts (*Sta-au'*[1]), and are compelled ever after to remain near the place where they died. Unhappy themselves, they envy those who are happy, and continually prowl about the lodges of the living, seeking to do them some injury. Sometimes they tap on the lodge skins and whistle down the smoke hole, but if the fire is burning within they will not enter.

Outside in the dark they do much harm, especially the ghosts of enemies who have been killed in battle. These sometimes shoot invisible arrows into persons, causing sickness and death. They have hit people on the head, causing them to become crazy. They have paralyzed people's limbs, and drawn their faces out of shape, and done much other harm.

[1] The human skeleton is also called *Sta-au'*, *i.e.* ghost. Compare Cheyenne *Mis-tai'*, ghost.

5: Grinnell Q,T-5 (ca.1888) 1962
NF6 Blackfoot NF6

MEDICINE PIPES AND HEALING

THE person whom the whites term "medicine man" is called by the Blackfeet *Ni-namp'-skan*. Mr. Schultz believes this word to be compounded of *nin'nah*, man, and *namp'-ski*, horned toad (*Phrynosoma*), and in this he is supported by Mr. Thomas Bird, a very intelligent half-breed, who has translated a part of the Bible into the Blackfoot language for the Rev. S. Trivett, a Church of England missionary. These gentlemen conclude that the word means "all-face man." The horned toad is called *namp'-ski*, all-face; and as the medicine man, with his hair done up in a huge topknot, bore a certain resemblance to this creature, he was so named. No one among the Blackfeet appears to have any idea as to what the word means.

The medicine pipes are really only pipe stems, very long, and beautifully decorated with bright-colored feathers and the fur of the weasel and other animals. It is claimed that these stems were given to the people long, long ago, by the Sun, and that those who own them are regarded by him with special favor.

Formerly these stems were valued at from fifteen to thirty head of horses, and were bought and sold like any other property. When not in use, they were kept rolled up in many thicknesses of fine tanned fur, and with them were invariably a quantity of tobacco, a sacred whistle, two sacred rattles, and some dried sweet grass, and sweet pine needles.

In the daytime, in pleasant weather, these sacred bundles were hung out of doors behind the owners' lodges, on tripods.

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

1: Dog Days

ELDERLY BLACKFOOT men and women who grew to adulthood in buffalo days had no doubts about the origin of their people. They knew, because their grandparents had told them, that Napi, the Old Man, was the creator of the world and every living thing in it.

In the beginning all the world was water. One day Old Man, either by design or because he was just curious, decided to find out what might lie beneath the water. He sent animals to dive below the surface. First duck, then otter, then badger dived in vain. Then Old Man sent muskrat diving into the depths. Muskrat remained under water so long Old Man began to fear that he had drowned. At last muskrat rose slowly to the surface, holding between his paws a little ball of mud. Old Man took this small lump of mud and blew upon it. The mud began to swell. It continued to grow larger and larger until it became the whole earth.

Then Napi traveled about over the earth piling up rocks to make mountains, gouging out beds of rivers and lakes and filling them with water. He covered the plains with grass. He made roots and berries grow on the grasslands and timber in the mountains and river valleys. He made all the animals and the birds. And then, from a lump of clay, he made himself a wife.

Together Old Man and Old Woman designed the people and determined how they should live. Old Man insisted that he should have the first say in everything. Old Woman agreed, provided she might have the second say.

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

Old Man said, "Let the people have eyes and mouths in their faces, and let them be straight up and down." But Old Woman added, "Yes, let them have eyes and mouths; but they shall be set crosswise in their faces."

Old Man said, "Let the people have ten fingers on each hand." "No," declared Old Woman, "ten fingers are too many. They will be in the way. Let them have four fingers and a thumb on each hand." So the people were made.

But Old Man and Old Woman could not agree on one important point. Should the people live forever, or should they die? Finally Old Man said, "I will throw a buffalo chip into the water. If it floats, the people will die for four days and live again; but, if it sinks, they will die forever." He threw the buffalo chip into the water, and it floated. "No," said Old Woman, "I will throw this rock. If it floats, the people will die for four days. If it sinks, they will die forever." She threw the rock into the water, and it sank to the bottom. Then they agreed that it was better that way. If people lived forever they would never feel sorry for one another.

At first the people were hungry and cold. Then Old Man showed them how to collect edible roots and berries, how to make wooden bows and stone-headed arrows, how to use weapons, traps, and deadfalls to kill buffalo and the smaller animals for food, and how to dress animal skins for warm clothing.

His work of creation completed, Old Man climbed a high mountain and disappeared.[1]

Some say that Napi's home was in the mountains at the head of the stream that still bears his name, Oldman River, in the province of Alberta. Blackfoot Indians can still point out Old Man's gambling place west of Fort Macleod, where Napi played the hoop-and-pole game long, long ago. However, the fact that Old Man, the creator, also appears in the mythology of the Arapaho, Gros Ventre, and Cree tribes suggests that he may have been

[1] Alexander Henry and David Thompson, *New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest*, II, 528. Many versions of this story have been recorded since Henry first mentioned the Old Man legend in his journal in 1810.

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

known to the Blackfeet in prehistoric times. Their old men probably were telling their grandchildren of Napi's wonder-workings long before the three Blackfoot tribes moved westward to their historic homeland in Alberta and Montana.

For nearly two centuries the three Blackfoot tribes have been known to white men by their separate names. They are the Pikuni or Piegan (pronounced Pay-gan'), the Kainah or Blood, and the Siksika or Blackfoot proper, often referred to as the Northern Blackfoot to distinguish it from the other two tribes. The three tribes were politically independent. But they spoke the same language, shared the same customs (with the exception of a few ceremonial rituals), intermarried, and made war upon common enemies. So it has been customary to speak of these three tribes as one people, under the general name of Blackfoot or Blackfeet. The former is the more literal translation of the native name, Siksikauwa (black-footed people). Together these three tribes comprised the strongest military power on the northwestern plains in historic buffalo days.

The Blackfoot tribes consider themselves to be of common descent. Long ago they probably were one tribe. But the three tribes were separate units at the beginning of the historic period.

Whether these Indians at one time dyed their footgear black or whether the moccasins of some of them happened to be coated with black earth or the ashes from prairie fires when the neighboring Cree Indians bestowed the name of Blackfoot upon them cannot be determined at this late date. Needless to say, the curious tourist who in recent years asked one of these Indians to remove his moccasins so she could see for herself was disappointed.

The name Piegan refers to a people who possessed poorly dressed or torn robes. The Blood tribe may have received its name from the Cree because its members were accustomed to paint their faces and robes with red earth, which is still the sacred paint among all the Blackfoot tribes. However, a century and a quarter ago the German scientist-explorer, Prince Maximilian zu Wied, was told that this tribe was named after some

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

shoot for the white beads." The other might say, "I took a sorrel horse from the Crows. I shoot for the red beads." If a player lied in proclaiming his coup, he would surely lose. 526

The players agreed between themselves which of them was to roll the hoop. If they couldn't agree, the one with the better war record was given his choice. Some men preferred to roll the wheel so they could know its course and speed. Others preferred to let their opponent roll the hoop so they could concentrate upon casting their pole. Before rolling, each man spat upon the head of his pole. The roller then lifted the wheel to the sun and rolled it toward the log at the far end of the course. Both men ran after it and hurled their weapons before the hoop struck the log. If one man pierced the center of the hoop with his pole, he won. If neither pole hit the center, that man won whose pole was in contact with the colored beads of his choice when the wheel stopped after rebounding from the log barrier. The game continued until one player either pierced the center hole of the wheel or scored his point. Usually it was not necessary to roll the wheel more than twice. Judges representing each society were stationed at both ends of the course to determine the winner.

Some young men played this hoop-and-pole game informally as a means of gambling. In these contests there were no recountings of war exploits or prayers to the sun before rolling the wheel. The players merely declared their targets. [525]

Boys played this game with a larger wheel for a target. It was a sarvis-berry-wood hoop with a rawhide webbing inside and a small hole in the center which the boys called "the belly button." The blunt-ended poles were as long as the players could reach with outstretched arms. Boys pretended they were lancing buffalo when they threw their poles. They called it the "bull game." Certainly hurling poles at a moving target was good training for the future hunter and warrior.

The Blackfoot Indians look upon the hoop-and-pole game as a very old one. They claim that Napi once played it against a Kutenai on Oldman River. The stakes were control of the buffalo. 526 773

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

According to the legend, Napi was the winner, and "that is why there were no buffalo west of the Rockies."[9]

Foot racing was another popular sport among boys and young men. Boys who could run faster than their playmates were proud of this accomplishment. More formal foot races were run between young men of the men's societies during summer encampments. Each society selected its fastest runner. Clad only in moccasins and breechclouts, they ran a course of half a mile or more. The challenged society had the right to determine the distance to be run.

Most exciting of the series of contests between men's societies during the summer encampments was horse racing. The horse entered by each society had to belong to one of its members. The entries were determined in secret trials held some distance from the camp by each society. Jockeys usually were relatives of the owners—light, adolescent boys who were smart, expert riders. They rode bareback with only a war bridle and whip to control their mounts. The jockeys wore only breechclouts and tied their hair behind their heads to keep it from blowing in their faces.

Presenting a challenge to an intersociety horse race followed a formal procedure. The challenging society selected one of its most successful warriors, who dressed just as he had when he had won a signal war honor and decorated his horse as it had appeared at that time. He mounted, rode around the camp circle to the lodge of the leader of the rival society, sang his war song, lifted his gun, and fired at the lodgepoles just above their crossing. Then he shouted his society's challenge to a horse race. The rival society's leader rushed out of his lodge, gun in hand, and fired into the air, shouting his acceptance of the challenge with some such boast as, "I killed an enemy and I scalped him. You aren't going to scalp me." Later that day delegations from the two societies met to decide upon the time and the details of the race.

These were usually match races run over a level stretch of plains near the encampment. Generally the course was about

[9] *Ibid.*, 359.

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

the taboos associated with the care of the bundle. Most bundles had to be hung on tripods behind the owner's lodge during the day and brought inside at night. Other taboos were more varied. The owner of a medicine pipe bundle must not let anyone pass in front of him when camp was moved. A beaver bundle owner dared not show fear of water in any form. The owner of a snake-painted tipi must not break a bone in his lodge.

Frequent transfer of medicine bundles was encouraged by the Blackfoot belief that having owned important bundles added to a man's prestige and social position. Men of distinction were proud to recount the various bundles they had possessed during their lifetime, just as they were proud to tell of their brave deeds in war. Everyone knew that purchase of an important bundle required sacrifice of considerable property and that learning the ritual of the bundle was an intellectual accomplishment.

Many articles associated with successful achievements in war came to be regarded as medicine bundles. Among them were headdresses, shirts, shields, knives, and lances. These more important war medicines were usually the property of the well-to-do members of the tribe.[1]

The most common of the more important classes of medicine bundles were the painted lodges. There were more than fifty of them among the three Blackfoot tribes. The handsomely painted lodge cover was not a sacred entity in itself. Rather it was part of a complex of sacred objects received by its original owner in his dream of power.

According to Piegan tradition some of the oldest painted lodges are the bear ones. Their origin is explained in the following legend: Long ago a young Piegan determined to obtain some secret power which would bring him success in war. While traveling through heavy timber in search of a fasting place, he came upon a cave. He entered it. When his eyes became accustomed to the darkness he saw the cave was occupied by a mother bear and her cubs. When he pleaded with the bear mother not to harm him, she quieted down and even let him fondle her cubs.

[1] War medicines are described on pages 127–28 of this book.

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

For four days and nights he stayed in the bear's den without food or water. Meanwhile he prayed to the bear to give him of its power.

On the fourth night he fell asleep. In his dream a male and female bear appeared. They took pity upon him. The female bear gave him her home, a handsome lodge with three red bears painted on each side and red circles on the front and back representing the bears' den. The doorway was covered with a bearskin. She also gave him incense to be burned in the lodge day and night, a blackstone pipe bowl carved in the shape of a bear, and a song, "Underneath there is a bear which is very powerful. With her protection I shall always be spared in battle."

Then the male bear spoke. "My son, I give you my lodge too." Two black bears standing on their hind legs were painted on this lodge, one at each side of the entrance. The father bear also gave him a pipe and a drum.

Then the mother bear gave him a knife with a bear-jaw handle. She threw the knife at him, and he grabbed it before it could harm him. The bears gave him a song to go with it. "A knife is just like dirt thrown against me."

The bears then drove their children back into the brush and painted themselves. They painted their faces red and made long vertical stripes on their faces by scratching off the paint with their claws.

They told him, "This is how you should paint for battle. This painting will protect you."

When enemies of the bears came through the brush and attacked them, the male bear charged and killed the attackers. Then he told the boy, "See. That is the way. Always charge in battle as I just did."

The next day the young man left the bears' den. Not long afterward he joined a war party. In battle he carried a bear knife, painted himself, and charged as the bears had taught him. He took several scalps, but was himself unharmed. After he returned home, he made the two bear lodges just as the bears had shown them to him in his dream.[2]

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

[ca. 1850] THE OLD TIME RELIGION

The bear knife became a coveted Blackfoot war medicine. It had a sharp double-edged iron blade. Bear jaws and feathers were bound to its wood or bone handle. There were more than a half-dozen bear knives among the three Blackfoot tribes. In 1847, the missionary Father Nicholas Point met a Frenchman who had lost all his horses in a fight with the Blackfeet. But he was proud to have captured "a bear knife, which is for the Indians what a floating flag is for civilized man."[2]

Only a very brave man dared to purchase a bear knife from its owner because the transfer ceremony was a dangerous ordeal. After they had purified themselves in a sweat lodge, the man who wished to acquire the bear knife and the owner entered the latter's lodge naked. A bed of thorns was in the lodge. The owner made a smudge of parsnip roots, donned a bearclaw necklace, sang his bear songs, and imitated a bear pawing the ground. Then he jumped upon the petitioner, pushed him on to the bed of thorns and painted him in the bear manner.

After that he said, "Now, I shall give you the bear knife. If you don't take it, I shall keep it. If you get hurt with it, don't blame me."

He crawled four times around the lodge interior growling like a bear. Then, holding the knife by the end of its sharp blade, he hurled it at the initiate. If the latter caught it, he became the new owner and the former owner congratulated him. "You gave your life for that knife. It will make you powerful."

The daddy of all Blackfoot medicine bundles was the beaver bundle. Indian traditions refer to the beaver bundle as the oldest type of medicine bundle. It was by far the largest. Owners of beaver bundles, known as beaver men or "those who have power over the waters," were the tribal calendar keepers. With sticks in their bundles they kept count of the passage of the months

[2] This origin legend was told me by Fish Wolf Robe, a Piegan, at the time I negotiated the purchase of a bear-painted lodge for the Museum of the Plains Indian.

[3] Nicholas Point, "A Journey on a Barge on the Missouri River from the Fort of the Blackfeet [Lewis] to that of the Assiniboin [Union], 1847," *Mid-America*, Vol. XIII, 247.

A [i.e., the origin legend of the bear painted lodges--Analyst]

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

778 [805] and they foretold the return of spring each year. These men and their bundles played important roles in calling the buffalo and in planting and harvesting sacred tobacco. The sun dance bundle is thought to have been derived from the beaver bundle.

778 539 773 There were several beaver bundles among the three Blackfoot tribes. Several different legends account for their origin. According to one Blood Indian version, the beaver bundle originated in this way: Once a man and his wife camped alone by the shore of a lake. In their lodge were the skins of almost every kind of animal and bird, for the man was a very good hunter. One day, while he was away hunting, a beaver came out of the water and made love to his wife. The beaver continued to visit her daily. Then one day he persuaded her to go with him to his home in the water. When the woman's husband came home, she was gone. He searched the neighborhood for her until he found her tracks leading into the water. Then he gave up his search.

At the end of four days his wife came out of the water and returned to the lodge. In the course of time she gave birth to a beaver child. She told her husband of her affair with the beaver, but he did not harm her. He became very fond of the beaver child.

When the beaver learned of the man's kindness to the beaver child, he took pity upon the man and decided to give him some of his medicine power in exchange for the bird and animal skins in the man's lodge. One day, when the woman was getting water from the lake, the beaver met her and told her he wished to visit her husband. He requested that incense be burned in the lodge to purify it before his arrival and that her husband give him all the things he asked for in his songs.

When the beaver entered, the lodge was scented with burning incense. He and the husband smoked together. Then the beaver began to sing a song in which he asked for a particular bird skin. When the song was ended, the man rose and gave it to him. Then one by one the beaver sang his songs. Each time he asked for the skin of a certain bird or animal, until he had obtained

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

all the skins in the man's lodge. But meanwhile the man learned all the songs of the beaver medicine and the bird and animal skin that went with each song.

After the beaver returned to his home in the lake, the hunter collected the skins of all the different birds and animals and made them into his sacred bundle. Thus the beaver medicine bundle came to be.[4]

The great size of this bundle and the variety of its contents caused the beaver ritual to be the most complex of all Blackfoot Indian rituals. It required years for a man to learn the several hundred songs of this ceremony, the animals to which each referred, and their proper sequence in the ritual. Consequently, ownership of a beaver bundle was not transferred very often. As a beaver man grew old, he taught the ritual to a younger man so that he could carry on the ceremony after the old man's death.

The beaver bundle was opened and the ritual performed in response to an Indian's vow to feast the beaver man and to give him valuable property if he or one of his family should recover from a serious illness or be saved from imminent danger on the warpath. In early times, when food was scarce and the people were hungry, they called upon the beaver man to open his mighty bundle and perform his ritual to call the buffalo. The beaver man and his wife danced, shaking the hoofs and tail of a buffalo which were taken from the bundle. He prayed and sang his potent buffalo-charming songs to change the direction of the wind and drive the buffalo toward camp. The next morning buffalo would be found close by and would be driven into the pound made by the people of the village. In gratitude for his service in preventing starvation, the people gave the beaver man choice morsels from the buffalo impounded and killed.

Seeds of the sacred tobacco planted by the Blood and Northern Blackfoot tribes were preserved through the winter in the bundles of beaver men. At planting time in May they gave a

[4] This origin legend was told me by Frank Red Crow, a Blood, in 1951. Four variants of the beaver medicine origin legend appear in Wissler and Duvall, "Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians," AMNH *Anth. Papers*, Vol. II, Part 1, 74-78.

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

feast and prepared the seeds by mixing them with deer, antelope, and mountain sheep dung, sarvis berries, and water. The soil was readied for planting by spreading brush over the field, burning the brush, and sweeping the ground with brush brooms. Each planter and his wife then dug a small plot about three feet square with a digging stick, dropped tobacco seeds in the holes, and covered them.

The beaver men believed the tobacco spirits were dwarfs no more than a foot high. Before leaving the garden for the summer hunt, each planter placed a little crooked stick in the center of his plot. Tied to this stick were a miniature pair of moccasins and a tiny pouch containing tobacco seeds—gifts to the "little people." In fall when the tobacco was ripe for harvest, the nomadic Indians returned to their little tobacco garden. The beaver man again performed his ritual before the tobacco was harvested.

Another type of medicine bundle which was of respectable age and great importance to the Blackfoot tribes was the medicine pipe. David Thompson learned of the medicine pipe among the Piegans before 1800. Alexander Henry, in 1809, was told of the Blackfoot belief that the medicine pipe was a gift from the thunder.

> Thunder is a man who was very wicked and troublesome to the Indians, killing men and beasts in great numbers. But many years ago he made peace with the Blackfeet, and gave them a pipestem in token of his friendship; since which period he has been harmless.[5]

In 1943, Makes-Cold-Weather, an elderly Piegan Indian, transferred his Blood Medicine Pipe to me for the collections of the Museum of the Plains Indian. At that time he recited the following legend of the origin of the medicine pipe:

« « « In the fall of the year three sisters went to pick berries on some hills near their camp. A storm came up quickly, and hail began

[5] Henry and Thompson, *New Light*, II, 366.

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

[ca. 1850]

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to fall. The two younger sisters ran back to camp, but the eldest stopped, looked up, and called out, "Oh, Thunder, stop this hail and I shall marry you." The storm ended, and the sky cleared.

Before she reached camp, the eldest sister saw a strange, handsome man walking toward her. When he drew near, she said to him, "Get away from me. I want nothing to do with you."

The man replied, "But you said you would marry me. I am the Thunder."

Then the girl recalled, "You are right. That is what I promised."

The young man said to her, "Now, close your eyes until I tell you to open them." She did as he told her. When she was told to open her eyes again, she found herself in a strange country. There were many lodges. The young man led her to one of them and told her to enter it. Inside the lodge he introduced her to his mother and father. She looked around the lodge and saw a large pipe hanging near them.

After the girl had lived in her new home for a while she became homesick. She went out into the hills and cried. When her husband went looking for her, he found her in tears. He asked her what was wrong, and she replied, "I'm lonesome for my own people--my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, whom I never see any more."

Then he promised her, "Stop crying and I shall take you back to your family."

When they returned to their lodge, her husband told his father that his wife was homesick. The father replied, "Yes, I was going to tell you to send her home. When she goes, tell her to take this pipe."

That evening the father showed her how to perform the medicine pipe ceremony, and explained, "In the spring of the year you will hear me thunder. Then you must give a feast, unwrap this pipe, and perform the ritual and dance I have taught you. I give you this lodge that goes with the pipe. Tell your medicine men to carry this pipe and dance out of the lodge so I can see them."

Then Thunder stood up, put the pipe on his back, and showed the girl how it should be carried when camp was moved. He also showed her how the bundle was to be supported on a tripod behind the lodge during the daytime while in camp. Then he said, "Now, close your eyes until I tell you to open them again." When she opened her eyes Thunder said, "Now I must leave you." She stood alone in the lodge.

Next morning a young Indian, who rose early, was surprised to see

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

a strange painted lodge in the camp. He reported its presence to the chief, who asked him to go see what the strange people were doing in his camp. When the young man looked into the lodge, he saw the girl, recognized her as the one who had been lost some time before, and hurried to tell her parents of her return. When her father saw the new lodge and the strange bundle, he asked her, "What are these?"

She explained, "They are Thunder's lodge and his medicine pipe. They are presents to you from my father-in-law, Thunder." » » »

Each year thereafter the medicine pipe was opened shortly after the first thunder was heard in spring. In his ritual the medicine pipe man carried his sacred pipe out of the lodge, raised it toward the sky, and prayed for the welfare of his people and that no one in his camp would be killed by thunder (lightning) that year. The pipe bundle also was opened when a camp member, in fulfillment of a vow to have the ritual performed should a dear one recover from sickness or survive dangers on the warpath, made a payment of valuable possessions to the medicine pipe man. It was opened when the tobacco in the bundle was renewed and when it was transferred to a new owner.

The highly respected medicine pipe men were easily recognized by their peculiar hairdress. Each let his hair grow long and wore it gathered in a large forward-projecting coil over his forehead. These men played an important role in camp movements, always leading the moving camp. Their pipes had a unique function in oath taking. A Blackfoot Indian who swore upon the medicine pipe made as solemn a pledge of speaking the truth as the Christian who swore upon the Bible in a court of law. These Indians believed that any man who violated his oath taken upon the medicine pipe would surely die.

There were nearly a score of medicine pipe bundles among the three Blackfoot tribes. The most sacred object in each bundle was a long wooden pipestem elaborately ornamented with plumes and such other decorations as eagle feathers, hair or weasel-skin pendants, trade beads, bells, or ribbons. The stone

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

was a crude skin doll containing tobacco seeds and a weasel skin stuffed with human hair. A flint arrowpoint hung from the doll's head. The Blackfoot Indians believed this peculiar bonnet and the elk garments had been given to a beaver medicine man long ago by a bull elk. The elk, in turn, had received them as presents from another elk who had run off with his wife. The primary costume accessory was a sacred digging stick similar in form to the ones commonly used by Blackfoot women for unearthing prairie turnips. Another legend tells of the origin of this religious symbol. A woman married the Morning Star and went to live with him in the lodge of his father, the Sun. One day the woman used this tool to uproot a sacred turnip. She looked down through the turnip hole, saw her own people on earth, and became homesick. Morning Star then permitted her to descend to earth through the turnip hole.

One by one the long series of songs recited the mythological origin of each object in the bundle. After the medicine woman was outfitted, her husband's body and face were painted black with charcoal, a half-moon was painted on his breast and a circular sun on his back, and lines representing sun dogs were made on his cheeks, chin, and forehead.

During this ceremony in the medicine woman's lodge an altar was constructed near the lodge door by stripping off the sod in an area about three feet square, covering it with a thin layer of light-colored earth, and executing a symbolic dry-color painting on this prepared surface. A central circle (Sun) was flanked by representations of two sun dogs (Sun's face painting), a crescent moon (Sun's wife), and a disc (Morning Star, their son). Before the medicine woman's party left her lodge, this altar was destroyed, symbolizing the obliteration of the scar on the face of the legendary Blackfoot hero, Scar Face. In the Scar Face myth his face was healed during his visit to the Sun.[10]

[10] The fact that three legends—the Beaver Medicine, the Woman Who Married a Star, and Scar Face—are required for the symbolism of the Sun Dance is further indication of the composite character of this ritual. Clark Wissler, "The Sun Dance of the Blackfoot Indians," American Museum of Natural History *Anthropological Papers*, Vol. XVI, Part 3.

9: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1955 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

They went after him and found he was Heavenly Colt. He was alive and in good condition. Heavenly Colt was returned to his rightful Blood owner. That horse had great secret power.

Like humans, horses were believed to survive death as spirits possessing the power to return and make their spirit presences known to the living. Weasel Tail illustrated his own strong belief in horse spirits by relating a personal experience.

About 50 years ago I visited the lodge of Steel, a Blood Indian. I knew Steel thought his father's spirit was near him at all times. I asked Steel, "Where is your father, Many Spotted Horses?" While I talked I heard a horse whinny far away. Then I heard a horse at the back of the lodge shaking and its stirrups rattling. Then I heard someone talking behind Steel. I could see no one there. It was Steel's father's spirit, come to visit him on his spirit horse.[84]

BELIEFS REGARDING THE ORIGIN OF HORSES

The beliefs of the great majority of aged, fullblood Blackfoot Indians regarding the origin of horses are embodied in their mythology. In the course of my field work on the Blackfeet Reservation, Mont., elderly Piegan informants recited three different myths explaining the origin of horses. One was told by Short Face, recognized by his fellows as the most accomplished storyteller on the reservation, in the fall of 1943. In the summer of 1947, my interpreters, Reuben and Cecile Black Boy, said that during the intervening years Dog Child, a North Piegan, had told them another version of this myth.

Short Face's version, which I have given a title to, follows.

THUNDER'S GIFT OF HORSES

Many years ago, when people used dogs for moving camp, there lived a Piegan named Wise Man. He and his wife were a handsome couple, but they wore very plain buckskin clothes. One day Wise Man said to his wife, "I have been thinking about something. If my plans work out we shall have very fine clothes. Let's move away from here and make camp in the woods. I'll collect all the wood you need, but you must not break any of the sticks I bring in."

Wise Man and his wife moved to the woods. After he had brought in wood, he told his wife, "Now I shall go up the hill and catch some eagles." He ascended the hill, dug a pit, found a dead coyote and cut it open, placed a roof of sticks over the pit after he had climbed into it, and tied the coyote on the roof. When eagles saw the coyote they swooped down and began pecking at the carcass. Wise Man grabbed each eagle in turn as it ate, pulled it into the pit and wrung its neck. He caught eight eagles. Then he returned to camp and told his wife, "I shall make myself a bonnet from these feathers." He made his bonnet—

[84] Wilson (1924, pp. 144–145) reported Hidatsa belief that all horses had supernatural powers, and that if horses were not properly cared for they would not increase in numbers and might leave their negligent owners. A Hidatsa informant also claimed the Assiniboin considered their horses sacred and sang sacred songs to them (ibid., p. 142). Dorsey (1894, p. 499) mentioned the Dakota custom of praying to horses. The existence of their horse medicine cults is evidence of belief in the supernatural powers of horses among other Plains and Plateau tribes.

9: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1955 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

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a circle of feathers standing straight up, with a feather trailer down the back. Then he fashioned some weasel snares and went about the countryside snaring weasels. He took them to his wife and said, "Now, tan these." She replied, "But what are you going to do with them?" "I shall use them to decorate my suit," said Wise Man. She tanned the weaselskins and sewed them on his plain buckskin suit as a fringe, just as he requested. Then he donned his new costume and asked her, "How do I look? Take a good look at me." She looked him up and down admiringly and replied, "You are very handsome looking man." Wise Man then said, "I am completely dressed. Now I shall show you how to dress."

He went into the woods and found an elk lick with many elk around it. With bow and arrows he killed a large number of them. From each he took only two teeth. He carried them to camp and drilled a hole near the base of each tooth. Then he showed the elk teeth to his wife and told her how to sew these teeth on her plain elkskin dress. When she had done that, she put on her dress, stood before her husband and asked him, "Now, how do I look?" Wise Man replied, "You are certainly a very beautiful woman. That is how I want you to look when you have occasion to wear your best clothes."

The couple then returned to the camp of their people. When the others saw their fine clothes, all the young men and women wanted their garments. They offered to barter their most valuable possessions for them. But Wise Man refused, saying. "I will not sell these clothes. You must hunt and make them for yourselves just as we have done. But I am going back to the woods and I shall make up another outfit which I shall trade you."

So Wise Man and his wife returned to their former camping place in the woods. There he met a man. The stranger said to him, "I shall help you. You haven't fixed that bonnet right. You should have quills on the feathers. You should have quills on your leggings and shirt too." Wise Man had never heard of quills and he asked, "But how shall I get these things you call quills? How shall I learn to fix them on my bonnet and shirt?" "Thunder will show you how to do that," the man replied. "But I have never seen Thunder," said Wise Man. "Where is he?" The stranger explained, "He lives above. You follow along the mountains to the end of the earth. There you will find a way to go to him."

Wise Man went to his wife and told her of his talk with the stranger. "A man came to me who told me how I can make my clothes even prettier by putting quills on them. He named someone who could help me to do this. I don't know who that is, but he told me how to find him." His wife answered, "All right, go look for him."

So Wise Man loaded his dog and went away, following the foot of the mountains. He passed mountain lions, bears and other large animals but they did not harm him. Some of them turned into persons. Finally he reached the end of the mountains. Ahead was nothing but water. The shore was thick with brush. Wise Man climbed a cliff and looked down. In the brush he saw a lodge. He descended and entered the lodge. It was empty. After a long time a man entered and spoke to him. "Where are you going? You can't go any farther." Wise Man replied, "I am going to find Thunder." The man said, "He is in the sky. You can't go there. But I shall help you, my boy. Climb this cliff and you will find some goats. Kill one, cut off the ends of his horns and bring them back here."

Wise Man did as he was told. When he returned with the pieces of horn the man told him, "I will give you my moccasins. Fasten these goat horns to them and they will help to hold you up. I shall help you. Follow me." They

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began to ascend, Wise Man following in the footsteps of the stranger, who had told him to look only ahead. After they had climbed a long time they reached a level place. It was another world.

Then the stranger turned to Wise Man and said, "This is Thunder's home. After you have walked a way you will be surrounded by horses. They are dangerous animals, but they will not hurt you. I shall leave you here. Go on to Thunder's camp. The first animals you meet will be Thunder's horses."

Wise Man walked on until he saw the horses. One of them spied him, and all came toward him and surrounded him. At first Wise Man was afraid. But the strange animals did not harm him. He soon lost his fear and began to pet them. They were so thick around him he could not proceed. But when night came they all lay down and went to sleep. Then Wise Man crawled away from them and walked on toward the lights of two camps in the distance. When he came near them he saw that they were beautifully painted lodges, each with a medicine pipe in front of it. He walked inside one of them. Thunder was there.

When Thunder saw Wise Man he told him to sit down. Then Thunder made a smudge and began to show Wise Man the ritual of the medicine pipe. Wise Man told him, "I came here to find out how to look good in my clothes. I want you to tell me what to do and how to do it. That is what is on my mind." Thunder replied, "My boy, come with me and I shall show you." Outside the lodge Thunder pointed to a porcupine and told Wise Man, "Kill it." This Wise Man did. Then Thunder showed him how to remove the quills, how to flatten them, to dye them different colors and to sew them on garments. When he had finished, Thunder said, "My boy, you have been good. You didn't frighten my horses. They didn't hurt you. They are the animals I ride. Because you did not frighten my horses and they were not afraid of you I shall give you some of them. I'll show you the songs of my pipe and my painted lodges and give them to you also. I'll show you how to pack the pipe on a horse's back. But before I give you all these things you must pay me." Wise Man asked, "What shall I give you?" Thunder said, "Give me a woman from your people, and give me a white buffalo robe." Wise Man asked, "How are you to get the woman?" Thunder replied, "My boy, I can do it with your help." Wise Man then said, "I shall get you a woman. But the white buffalo is very fast. I'll try to get you a white buffalo robe, but it will be very difficult."

Then Thunder went to his herd and selected 10 head of horses, and gave them to Wise Man saying, "Now, my boy, take these. They will raise colts for you and increase. I shall put a porcupine on earth. It too will increase. You can kill porcupines, eat them, and use their quills. Generation after generation of your people will use these things. There will be no end to them. I want you to take the medicine pipe, and in the spring of the year when the leaves begin to come out you will hear me rumbling. Gather your friends quickly and dance to the medicine pipe as I have shown you. I shall see you then and know that you have heard my call. Until the end of the world you will have these things. Not until then shall I take them back."

Thunder then said, "Now, my boy, I'll take you down. Tie the tails of two old mares together. When you have done that you will be on earth again. Tonight there will be a strong wind. If your lodges fall down or if your horses become frightened, I'll take them back. Otherwise you may keep them. In future times many of your old people, to whom I shall give the power, will dream of animal-painted lodges and sacred pipes."

The night after Wise Man's return to earth there was a storm and a very high wind. But the horses were not frightened and the lodges did not fall. Wise

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Man kept the things Thunder gave him. Until this day the Indians have porcupines, painted lodges, medicine pipes, and horses.

In March 1943, Chewing-Black-Bones recited another myth explaining the origin of horses. He claimed that Head Carrier, who died half a century earlier, told him the following story, which I have named.

WATER SPIRIT'S GIFT OF HORSES

A long time ago there was a poor boy who tried to obtain secret power so that he might be able to get some of the things he wanted but did not have. He went out from his camp and slept alone on mountains, near great rocks, beside rivers. He wandered until he came to a large lake northeast of the Sweetgrass Hills (Lake Pakowki). By the side of that lake he broke down and cried. The powerful man who lived in that lake heard him and told his son to go to the boy and find out why he was crying. The son went to the sorrowing boy and told him that his father wished to see him. "But how can I go to him?" the lad asked. The son replied, "Hold onto my shoulders and close your eyes. Don't look until I tell you to do so."

They started into the water. As they moved along the son told the boy, "My father will offer you your choice of the animals in this lake. Be sure to choose the old mallard and its little ones."

When they reached his father's lodge, the son told the boy to open his eyes. He did so and was taken into the father's lodge. The old man said to him, "Son, come sit over here." Then he asked, "My boy, why did you come here?" The boy explained, "I have been a very poor boy. I left my camp to look for secret power so that I may be able to start out for myself." The old man then said, "Now, son, you are going to become the leader of your tribe. You will have plenty of everything. Do you see all the animals in this lake? They are all mine." The boy, remembering the son's advice, said, "I should thank you for giving me as many of them as you can." Then the old man offered him his choice. The boy asked for the mallard and its young. The old man replied, "Don't take that one. It is old and of no value." But the boy insisted. Four times he asked for the mallard. Then the old man said, "You are a wise boy. When you leave my lodge my son will take you to the edge of the lake. When it is dark he will catch the mallard for you. When you leave the lake don't look back."

The boy did as he was told. At the margin of the lake the water spirit's son collected some marsh grass and braided it into a rope. With the rope he caught the old mallard and led it ashore. He placed the rope in the boy's hand and told him to walk on, but not to look back until daybreak. As the boy walked along he heard the duck's feathers flapping on the ground. Later he could no longer hear that sound. As he proceeded he heard the sound of heavy feet behind him, and a strange noise, the cry of an animal. The braided marshgrass turned into a rawhide rope in his hand. But he did not look back until dawn.

At daybreak he turned around and saw a strange animal at the end of the line, a horse. He mounted it and, using the rawhide rope as a bridle, rode back to camp. Then he found that many horses had followed him.

The people of the camp were afraid of the strange animals. But the boy signed to them not to fear. He dismounted and tied a knot in the tail of his horse. Then he gave everybody horses from those that had followed him. There were plenty for everyone and he had quite a herd left over for himself.

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Five of the older men in camp gave their daughters to him in return for the horses he had given them. They gave him a fine lodge also.

Until that time the people had had only dogs. But the boy told them how to handle the strange horses. He showed them how to use them for packing, how to break them for riding and for the travois, and he gave the horse its name, elk dog. One day the men asked him, "These elk dogs, would they be of any use in hunting buffalo?" The boy replied, "They are fine for that. Let me show you." Whereupon he showed his people how to chase buffalo on horseback. He also showed them how to make whips and other gear for their horses. Once when they came to a river the boy's friends asked him, "These elk dogs, are they of any use to us in water?" He replied, "That is where they are best. I got them from the water." So he showed them how to use horses in crossing streams.

The boy grew older and became a great chief, a leader of his people. Since that time every chief has owned a lot of horses.

The third horse origin myth was told by Mrs. Cecile Cree Medicine [115] in July 1947. She explained that her father, Running Crane, chief of the Lone Eater's Band of the Piegan, had told it to her. This myth I have also named.

HOW MORNING STAR MADE THE FIRST HORSE

Before the Piegan had horses they had dogs. Then everything was flint. There was no iron.

One night a Piegan invited all the chiefs to his lodge. He told his wife, "You sit outside with the baby." Her sister saw her sitting there and asked her what she was doing outside alone. She replied, "My husband does not want me to be in the lodge with the chiefs." She was very unhappy. Later she looked into the sky and saw the bright morning star. She said, "I wish I could be married to that pretty star up there."

Next morning she went to pick up buffalo chips for fuel. She saw a young man approaching her. He said, "Now I have come for you." But she replied, "I will have nothing to do with you. Why do you want me to go away with you? I'm married." Then the young man reminded her, "Last night when you were sitting outside your lodge you said you wanted to marry me, the bright star. I heard you and now I have come for you." She replied, "Yes, that's right. Let's go."

The young man said, "Take hold of my back. Follow me, but keep your eyes shut." She did as she was told. After a time the young man told her to open her eyes. When she did she saw that the country was strange to her. Young Morning Star then asked her into his lodge where an old man was sitting. He was Sun, Morning Star's father. Sun said, "My son, why did you bring this girl here?" The young man answered, "It was the girl's wish. So I went after her."

After a time Morning Star and this woman had a little boy. Old grandfather Sun said, "I shall give the boy something to play with." He gave him a crooked tree which was every bit the shape of a little horse, and said, "Now, my boy, play with this." When Morning Star saw his son playing with the wooden toy he said to his wife, "Wouldn't it look better if this plaything had fur like a deer?" She agreed. So they put fur on it. Then Morning Star said, "Another thing it should have is a tail." So he put a black tail on it and added some ears as well. Then he said, "Now let's take some black dirt and rub its hoofs so they will shine." So it was done.

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Then his wife said to the Morning Star, "Now you are finished. Are you satisfied?" "No," replied Morning Star, "Put the boy on the animal's back. Let him ride it." When the boy was astride the toy, Morning Star said, "Now I shall make it go. I shall call sh-sh-sh-sh four times. The fourth time it will start like an animal." The first time Morning Star called, the horse began to move its legs. The second time, the horse began to move its tail. The third time it moved its ears. When he called sh-sh-sh-sh the fourth time the horse shied. Then Morning Star called "ka-ka-ka-ka," and the horse stood still. Morning Star cut a piece of rawhide for a bridle. The boy had great fun with his little horse.

Later, when the boy's brothers and sisters went to dig wild turnips, his mother asked Morning Star, "Why can't I do that?" He told her she might go with the others, but she must not dig the turnip with the big leaves. So she joined the party. She saw the big-leafed turnip and began to dig around it. At last she dug it up. Dust came up through the hole. When the dust cleared away she looked into the hole and way below she saw her own camp and her parents. She began to cry.

When she returned to Morning Star's lodge he saw her swollen eyes and knew what had happened. He asked her, "Why are you crying?" She told him that she was lonesome for her parents. Morning Star then told her she could return to them. He instructed his people to cut rawhide rope. They made a great pile of it. Then he told his wife, "I'll take you down the rope first. Then I'll take the horse down by my own power." He wrapped his wife and son in buffalo robes, tied them to the rope, and lowered them through the turnip hole.

Two young fellows lying on their backs near the camp of the woman's parents saw a strange object descending from the sky. They were frightened and started to run away when the bundle reached the earth. But the woman called to them, "Untie me." They untied her and went to camp to tell the woman's husband that she was back. When her husband saw the little boy he told his wife, "I don't want him here. Don't feed that boy. Don't give him any bedding. Let him sleep by the door." The woman was watched so closely she couldn't help her son. A half-brother took pity on the little boy. He hid some of his own food and gave it to the little boy to keep him from starving.

Morning Star saw how badly his son was treated on earth. One day when the half-brother took the boy into the brush hunting they saw a strange man. They were afraid and started to run when the man called, "Stop!" They halted and sat down beside the man. He told the little boy, "You are my son. I know your brother loves you and has fed you. But I have come after you because you have been abused." The little boy began to cry. "No, I want to stay with my brother." Then Morning Star explained, "Three of us cannot go. I can only take you. But I promise you I'll give your brother some great power here on earth."

Before he departed Morning Star told the older boy, "Go to that lake yonder. Sleep beside it for four nights. I'll give you power. The man in that lake will help you too. But I warn you that before sunrise, while you are sleeping, animals like I gave your little brother will come out of the lake. When you wake, pay no attention to the other horses. Just try to catch the little, shaggy, buckskin colt. If you catch that colt all of the other horses will stop beside him. If you don't catch him, all will run back into the water."

The morning after the older brother's first night by the lake he tried to catch one of the pretty colts rather than the ugly little buckskin Morning Star had told him to get. All of the horses ran back into the lake. The second morning the older brother tried again and failed. The third morning all of the horses got away once more. During the fourth night Morning Star came to the boy in

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his dream and said, "Now, my boy, I told you to catch that shaggy buckskin colt. If you don't catch him tomorrow you will not have my power."

Next morning, when the boy awoke he saw the horses again. This time he singled out the little colt and roped him with a rawhide line. All the other horses stampeded toward the lake. As the leading ones reached the shore the little buckskin whinnied. They all turned and ran back toward him. On the fifth night Morning Star again appeared to the boy in his dream, saying, "Now, my boy, when you return home with those horses give everyone but your father a horse. Because he abused you, he shouldn't have any."

When the boy returned to camp and distributed the horses, his father became very angry. "Why didn't you give me one of them?" he raved. The boy, with Morning Star's power, struck his father and killed him.

Morning Star then told the boy, "From now on your people will have horses. You will no longer need to use dogs. In time you will have many horses. Your horses will never disappear. You need never walk any more."

The principal chief of the camp sent word to the boy that he wanted him for a son-in-law. He gave the boy his two daughters and offered him his place as head chief.

More than 40 years ago Duvall obtained a condensed version of this third myth, which was said to have been told by Head Carrier many years before. As published (Wissler, 1912, pp. 285–286), this story links the origin of horses with the woman-who-married-a-star episode, although details of the creation of horses by the star differ from Mrs. Cree Medicine's version, and the episode explaining the later acquisition of horses by the older brother is lacking.

Two other Blackfoot myths explaining the acquisition of the first horse from the waters of a lake have been published. One account was told to George Bird Grinnell by Almost-a-Dog, a Piegan. It most nearly approximates the episode of the acquisition of horses from a lake by the elder brother contained in Mrs. Cree Medicine's version (Grinnell, 1895, pp. 166–168). The other myth, told Rev. Edward F. Wilson by the North Blackfoot chief, Big Plume, purports to explain how the Shoshoni first obtained horses from the waters of a large, salt water lake "away south" (Wilson, 1887, p. 185).

The number and variety of Blackfoot myths explaining the origin of horses may be due to the tendency for each narrator to elaborate the basic theme as he sees fit and to link the story of the origin of horses with portions of other myths. It is significant that the five recorded Blackfoot mythological accounts of the origin of horses credit the first horses either to sky spirits or to underwater spirits. In this respect the horse origin myths follow the tribal pattern of imputing the origin of their most sacred possessions to one or the other of these spirit sources. The Sun Dance and medicine pipe are represented in Blackfoot mythology as gifts of Sun and Thunder, two of the most feared and revered sky spirits. The beaver bundle and buffalo painted lodges are represented as gifts of the underwater people, also held in great awe by the Blackfoot. These myths con-

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stitute evidence that to the native mind the horse was a godsend of importance comparable to that of their most sacred ceremonies, created by the same supernatural powers who gave the Indians their traditional ceremonial institutions.[85]

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[85] In the 1870's Lieutenant Bradley recorded a Crow myth to the effect that their first horses came out of the water (Bradley, 1923, pp. 298–299). Possibly Crow and Piegan myths relating to the water origin of horses developed from a common source. In 1947, Enoch Smoky recited to me a Kiowa myth, which he claimed his grandfather had told him. "It used to be that the Kiowa used only dogs for pack animals. Then one time an old medicine man had a dream in which he saw a strange animal. He began thinking about how he could make it. He took some mud and made a body, covered it with the hair of a prairie dog, gave it the eyes of an eagle, hoofs made from a turtle shell and wings to make it travel faster. But the horse flew away up into the air and did not return. There it remained to bring cyclones. Later the old man made another animal just like the first, but without wings. It was successful. From that time on the Kiowa have had horses."

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Sieur Pierre Deliette, who accompanied a village of the Illinois on a buffalo hunt in 1688, not only described their surround of the buffalo on foot, but observed that guards prevented the disruption of the communal effort by attempts to hunt alone in advance of the village. These guards punished offenders through destruction of their property "without the man or woman saying a single word" (Pease and Werner, 1934 b, pp. 307–311).

Henry Kelsey, the first white man known to have met Indians on the northern Plains, described the buffalo surround on foot of the Assiniboin or Cree in 1691:

> Now ye manner of their hunting these Beasts on ye Barren ground is when they seek a great parcel of them together they surround them with men which done they gather themselves into a smaller Compass Keeping ye Beasts still in ye middle and so shooting ym till they break out at some place or other and so get away from ym. [Kelsey, 1929, p. 18.]

Nicholas Perrot noted that some of the eastern marginal tribes fired the prairie grass to prevent the surrounded buffalo from escaping the pedestrian hunters (Blair, 1912, vol. 1, pp. 120–122).

Blackfoot traditions also refer to the impounding of buffalo and driving them over cliffs. They credit the mythological character, Blood Clot, with the initiation of the buffalo fall. We know that impounding buffalo was practiced on the Plains before the Indians acquired horses, for Spanish explorers witnessed the construction and use of a cottonwood corral by a village of 50 lodges of foot Indians near the Canadian River in 1599 (Bolton, 1916, pp. 227–228). The survival of impounding among the Assiniboin and Cree, eastern neighbors of the Blackfoot, until the end of buffalo days was due primarily to their relative poverty in horses.

Granted that the Blackfoot employed one or more methods of communal buffalo hunting before they acquired horses, we then have a clue to their community organization at that time. Surrounding or impounding of buffalo by footmen could not have been successfully accomplished by camps composed of relatively small family groups. The cooperative hunt necessitated a band or village organization of 10 or preferably more lodges. Saukamaupee told David Thompson of "small camps of ten to thirty tents" of Piegan which were obliged to separate for hunting in pre-horse times, as well as a large gathering of some 350 warriors who feasted and danced for several days before starting to battle against the Shoshoni ca. 1723 (Thompson, 1916, pp. 328–329). This suggests that pre-horse buffalo-hunting techniques were efficient enough to permit seasonal convocations of several bands or whole tribes. That, of course, was the seasonal pattern in the 19th century. Alexander Henry, in 1811, noted that the Piegan dispersed into small camps of 10 to 20 lodges in winter and united in large

9: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1955 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

demanded an explanation. The Blackfoot looked upon the horse as a godsend. In their mythology it was represented as a gift of powerful sky or water spirits. Horses were thought to possess supernatural powers. The ability of certain horses to perform feats of unusual strength or endurance was proof to the Indians that those animals possessed those powers to a very high degree. 711 231 182 [713] [718]

Some horses were believed to have appeared to their owners in dreams and conferred their powers upon them. Through such transference of powers the secret horse medicine cult was believed to have originated. The relatively few members of this cult carefully guarded their knowledge of the origin of their medicines and restricted their use by outsiders in such a way that their secrets would not be revealed. Members were feared and respected by fellow tribesmen to the extent that many aged Indians still fear to discuss the cult. There are no other Blackfoot ceremonial organizations whose secrets have been so closely guarded, with the possible exceptions of the Horn Society among the Blood and the Tobacco Planters of the North Blackfoot. The influence of horse medicine men's activities pervaded the fields of warfare, hunting, recreation, and curing, as well as the daily lives of their people. Their ritual practices were designed to heal sick and wounded horses and to cure humans, to revive exhausted horses, to assist individuals in capturing horses from the enemy or in handicapping enemy war horses, to prevent hunting horses from falling in slippery winter weather and to retard the movements of buffalo in the hunt, to handicap race horses, to capture wild horses, and to prevent horses from straying from their owner's herds. Their ceremony, the horse dance, followed the generalized Blackfoot ceremonial bundle pattern but had distinctive features. Taboos observed by horse medicine men also were distinctive. There was a close relationship between the horse medicine men and owners of medicine pipes whom the horse specialists customarily aided. These specialists also aided other Indians in the preparation of protective "horse bridles" worn under the heads of war horses on scalp raids. 744 231

Indirectly the influence of the horse affected other Blackfoot religious rituals. Horse payments were invariably made as inducements to owners of ceremonial bundles to transfer their power to prospective purchasers. At intervals throughout the tribal Sun Dance ceremony participants were required to recite their coups, most commonly acquired through raiding for horses. In the two cases of self-torture during a Sun Dance that have been recorded in detail, the suppliants are known to have vowed to undergo the torture just before entering enemy camps to take horses. 231 182 746

Finally the horse was given a role of prominence in burial and mourning rites. The favorite horses of a wealthy individual were 231 182 764 765

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Native clothing persisted until the reserve period and later, but from the beginning the Blackfoot adopted the clothes of the whites which they regarded as superior to their own. As early as 1787, Thompson, writing of the Piegan, remarked that in wet weather leather injures the constitution and added, " . . . of this the natives appear sensible, for all those who have it in their power buy woolen clothing."[114] Culbertson, in about 1833 noted that the women were more conservative in this respect and took to cotton and woolen clothing much later than the men.[115]

Aside from guns, ammunition, powder, awls, iron, beads and the items mentioned above, the Blackfoot required little else from the traders. As late as 1855 accounts show that they were unfamiliar with white man's food and did not know how to prepare even the most common varieties. The Blackfoot had convened to make a treaty with the American government and were given gifts of foodstuffs.

" . . . they threw the flour into the air to watch it drift in slufting streams, men emptied sugar into a stream, and as it dissolved drank of the sweetened water until they could drink no more. And when they cooked the rice as they were accustomed to cook the roots, no camp had kettles enough to hold the startling quantities."[116]

In the mythology that refers to the pre-horse days the food quest looms as a serious problem. The people starve frequently and have difficulty in locating and corraling the buffalo. Yet, this probably refers only to periods of abnormal scarcity for there is reason to believe that even in pre-horse times, the efficiency of Blackfoot techniques and food preservation furnished an ample food supply for the existence of even large social groups.[117] The supply varied with the season. In the summer fresh meat was to be had in abundance and the surplus was dried and stored for the winter. The bands were almost completely immobilized in the winter by the snow and storms, and buffalo hunting was well nigh impossible. Even when snow did not cover the ground it was difficult to locate and follow the roaming herds

of Buffalo.

[114] Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 353.

[115] Bradley, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

[116] Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

[117] To Kroeber's recent queries (*op. cit.*, p. 77, 1940), "Could any good sized group live permanently off the bison on the open Plains while they and their dogs were dragging their dwellings, furniture, provisions, and children? . . . How could several thousand people have congregated in one spot to hold a four or eight days' Sun Dance?", the historical material gives a positive answer. An account of a pre-horse war party tells of 350 Piegan warriors fighting the Shoshone. At the conservative estimate of one warrior to every five persons we would have a group of about 1500 people gathered in one spot for a number of days. This gives a picture differing decidedly from the speculative reconstructions of pre-horse Plains conditions with its atomic social groups, "miserably poor and chronically hungry." See pp. 76-77.

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age of these societies among the Blackfoot. If the widespread distribution of such societies in the Plains is taken as a criterion of age, then the existence of a rudimentary system of age grades is very old among the Blackfoot and probably pre-white. The fact that Blackfoot mythology refers to four basic age grades in a tale of the early days may be significant, depending upon the degree of historicity we grant to their mythology. Some Blackfoot tales are remarkable for their historical accuracy. For example, the tales which tell of their obtaining horses from the Shoshone to the west and guns from the Cree to the east are both verified by historical material.

Henday's account of 1754 suggests some policing organization, for he remarks upon the excellent discipline in a camp of 200 Piegan tipis.[132] Thompson in 1787 is the first specifically to mention a policing group. He writes of "soldiers",—young men, married or about to be married, who keep peace and order in camp and prevent gambling disputes.[133] Thompson knew the Piegan well, and that he said nothing more of societies is significant negative evidence. Our first description of Blackfoot societies as we know them was written by Maximilian in 1833. He describes a fully developed and flourishing system of age grades and their associated rituals.[134] Maximilian remarked that the Blackfoot age grades were almost identical with those of the Siouan tribes to the south.

Kroeber[135] and Lowie[136] have shown that there is a greater similarity between certain Blackfoot societies and those of the village tribes, the Mandan and Hidatsa, than between Blackfoot and Crow and Assiniboine. How are we to account for these similarities? There are at least two alternatives. Either these similarities are due to borrowing from the south through intermediary tribes, or what seems more probable, they were borrowed directly. Our knowledge of early tribal locations for our area shows that the Blackfoot had no contact at all with the village tribes. The first contacts in the historical period as shown by the literature and the tradition of the tribes themselves occurred in the eighteen twenties and thirties, when the American Fur Company established trading posts frequented by both the Mandan and Hidatsa and the Blackfoot. It is therefore suggested that the increase in the number of age societies took place at a relatively late period, probably in the eighteen thirties or late twenties. This development would therefore coincide with the period in which the expansion of polygyny and herding occurred. The borrowing of age grades

[132] Henday, *op. cit.*, p. 337.
[133] Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 338.
[134] Thwaites, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-117.
[135] Kroeber, "The Ceremonial Organization of the Plains Indians of North America," *Congres International des Americanistes*, Quebec, 1907, p. 57.
[136] Lowie, "Plains Age Societies," *AMNH-AP*, Vol. 11, pp. 930, 933.

773 824 [783] In the mythical tale of Scarface, the protagonist enjoyed the comradeship of Morning Star, who took him to his lodge in the supernatural realm. Scarface met Sun and Moon, who were offended by his foul odor and decided to wash him in a smudge of cedar. After proving his worth by ridding the neighborhood of seven deadly cranes, Sun agreed to grant Scar- 343 face's wish that his ugly scar be removed. He built four sweat lodges of one hundred willows each; and, as the successive rituals were completed, his deformity gradually disappeared. Scarface finally emerged as a handsome young man, identical in feature to Morning Star. His scarred face was miraculously changed to that of a diety.

783 [824] Incensing procedure varied slightly among ceremonialists, but the general formula was well defined. In the making of a smudge, hot coals were removed from the fire by means of a forked stick of choke cherry (Prunus virginiana) about 60 cm. long. The coals were laid in a small cleared place (the altar), and whatever was going to be used---sweet grass, [788] alpine fir---was prayerfully positioned on top of the coals. The rising smoke was cupped in the hands and was carried, with brushing motions, from the head to the shoulders and down to the feet. The songs sung during the cupping and brushing were created especially for this purpose. The procedure was repeated four times, to symbolize the cleansing of the entire body. Ceremonial artifacts, too, were incensed. (The prescribed uses of incense for specific ceremonies are given in the Annotated List of Plants.)

343 783 824 The sweat lodge offered another means of purification---one that was rather an ordeal. Wands of willow (Salix spp.) were placed with both ends in the ground, so as to form a dome. The floor of the sweat lodge was covered with sun sage (Artemisia ludoviciana), which served to cleanse the initiates during the sweat. Variations in the construction of the sweat lodge were dictated by the society or bundle to which the sweat lodge belonged; this will be discussed later.

824 778 773 The mediating nature of plants can be seen in the important function of the Holy Turnip of the Natoas bundle. The turnip (symbolized by a plumed headdress) was the plant that was pulled from the ground by the woman who married Morning Star and went to live in the sky. It was through the hole left by the plant that she saw her people once again; then she became homesick and at length returned, bringing with her the Natoa bundle as a gift from the supernatural realm. The turnip had quite literally become a gate through which the connection between man and the supernatural was realised.

824 [783] It was no accident that all the plants used in the smudges and sweat lodges were aromatic herbs. Sweat grass, juniper, alpine fir, and sage yielded potent scents to those in need.

[821] Another practice illustrates this point. It is well known that the elements of the weather were personified by the Blackfoot. Such was the [782] case with the thunder. It was during heavy storms that needles of alpine fir (Abies lasiocarpa) were placed on a smudge with the expressed desire that Thunder would smell the symbolic offering, recognize his loyal subjects, and keep his lightning away from the camps.

[781] The figuring of plants in important parts of Blackfoot religion and mythology is evidence of strong belief in their effectiveness in helping anyone disposed to use them for attaining spirituality. Other plants had slightly different functions in the religious life of the Blackfoot---aspen and poplar (Populus spp.) for centerpoles, the "power root" (Angelica dawsonii) of the Horn Society, and tobacco---but the difference seems to have been one of degree rather than essence.

This overview is not meant to be more than suggestive of Blackfoot religious conceptions. The topic far exceeds the scope of this study. Our task is merely to document some of the uses of plants in Blackfoor religious activity. The remainder of this paper is devoted to those particulars.

796 824 [178] [237] Society rituals was traditionally made from two incense tongs, but recently two poles crossed at right angles have been used. Eagle feathers and cloth are attached at the top. The sage is tied at both ends of the arms and at the center, where the poles cross (Fig. 12), balls of sage are also used to cleanse the body during participation in the All Smoking Ceremony.

[782] In the Okan (Holy Lodge) of the Sun Dance the Lodge dancers wore sage around their wrists and ankles---as though they were themselves offerings.

[785] [302] Among the Peigan, one man fasted until the Okan center pole was raised; then he entered a sweat lodge and used sage to wipe off the black paint with which he had been covered. In early times sage was used as a bed for the Buffalo Stones (Iniskim) during buffalo drive rituals.

[823] It seems that the proper way to dispose of the sage was to throw it eastward rather than burn it or just put it down. There were other uses of course. [775] A person afraid of a ghost would cleanse himself with sage. A [773] man who was going to enter a horse race might do the same. There does not appear to be an origin myth for this plant.

SASKATOON

Amelanchier alnifolia Nutt

824 796 262 The saskatoon (Fig. 13) is a well known bush of the river bottoms and coulee slopes. Its berries make preserves and tasty snacks. They were included in Blackfoot ritual meals. A berry soup accompanied most ceremonial events, such as the transfer of a tipi design or the opening [462] of a Medicine Pipe bundle or a Beaver bundle. The woman prepared the soup from saskatoon berries, assorted roots, fat, and water. At an appointed [782] time during the ceremony this soup was served to all participants. The soup was blessed, and an offering of one of the berries was put back into the ground, before eating began. A few mouthfuls were taken; then the

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 29]

824 like a religious bundle. One informant, who owned a Weasel-tailed suit,
796 said that the black tip of the weasel's tail represented a creeping juniper
[237] berry that had become attached.
[212]

ALPINE FIR

824 Abies lasiocarpa (Hook) Nutt
783
782 Katoy-yis, the Blackfoot "sweet pine"——that is, alpine fir (Fig. 19)——
was used an incense, primarily in association with the Medicine Pipe bundles.
[276] This was because pipes had been given by Thunder. Similarly, a smudge of
[775] alpine-fir needles was made, for safety's sake during severe thunderstorms.
[789]
[824] For the benefit of the reader and student we have included a list of medicine
778 pipe bundles with which the use of this plant is required as incense:
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824

Long Time Pipe

Riding Pipe

Gros Ventre Pipe

Cree Pipe

Mandan Pipe

Opposite Direction Pipe

Arapahoe Pipe

Childrens Pipe

Short Pipe

Small Pipe

Red Covered Pipe

Shaggy Covered Pipe

White Mans Pipe

Sarsi Pipe

Numerous unnamed medicine pipe bundles

000 We have found fir needles in the initiation bundles of the Horn Society.

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Fig. 20 — Otter painted lodge of the Blood Indians, showing the Fallen Stars (puffballs) Lycoperdon sp. around the base of the lodge. Photo courtesy of J. Dawson.

824 Castilleja spp.

[524] Children rubbed the flowers on their bouncing arrows for color and shine.

[386] Arrow feathers were dyed a light yellow by combining them with the flowers and keeping them under pressure for a few hours.

[281] The flowers were used to shine and waterproof hides.

The color forms were considered the effect of age, the sequence moving from white to red to yellow.

824 Clematis verticellaris
775
755

The plant, a creeping vine, was called "ghost rope" because it covered trees and bushes in a mysterious way. The leaves were used in the removal of "ghost bullets" (supernatural objects that were shot into people by ghosts). The bullets were removed by a diviner either with a sucking tube or through a slit in the skin made by a flint. Then the leaves were
[828] boiled and applied to the place where the bullets were removed. Fainting was often the result of coming near a ghost and the victim was revived with a smudge of the stem of this plant. At night, children wore the flowers in their hair to keep ghosts away.

824 Cornus stolonifera
773

According to a certain myth there was a time when the bark of this bush was white and not red. Naapi saw some gophers playing in the warm ashes of a campfire. They would bury each other in the ashes and when it got too hot they would cry out and the others would uncover them. Naapi joined the game and persuaded them all to get in the ashes. Only a pregnant gopher resisted and Naapi let her go, saying that she was necessary to propogate the species. Then he roasted the gophers and made a frame of cornus stolonifera which he used as a plate while he ate them. That was how the

[824] [775] bark turned red and to this day the grease from the gophers drips from the branches when they are heated.

[276] When the usual wood could not be found, the stems of C. stolonifera were used to make pipestems and tamps.

Delphinium bicolor

[386] The flowers were mixed in water and used to dye quills a light blue.

Elaeagnus commutata

This bush obtained the name "excrement smell" from the story of Naapi and the Gophers. Naapi punished his anus for failing to guard his roasted gophers from a lynx by hitting it with a branch of this plant. From that time on the wood smelled like excrement when it was burned and those who used it for firewood were chided for being lazy.

In craft, the seeds were cleaned, boiled, threaded and hung to dry. [301] Then they were greased and made into necklaces. Sometimes the seeds were [524] interspaced with Juniperus berries. Also, the bark of the bush was braided and used to whip the stone tops which children spun on the ice during winter. These whips usually lasted longer than the rawhide ones.

Epilobium angustifolium

[281] The flowers were rubbed on rawhide thongs and mittens for waterproofing.

[751] During the winter the powdered inner cortex was put on the hands and face to protect them from the cold. It was especially useful when the hands were uncovered for skinning, etc. When the powder was used, the hands would not hurt when they warmed up again.

Equisetum arvense

[524] Children used the plant to shine their bouncing arrows.

[751] The powdered stems were put in moccasins to avoid foot cramps when traveling long distances.

524 824 [278] [752] in their pods. Then the leader would suddenly stop and look behind him while the others dropped to the ground. The leader struck whoever remained standing with a smoking stick which he carried. Then he took some of the seeds of the plant, chewed them and applied the mixture to the burn. Shortly the irritation stopped and the game continued with changing leaders.

824 [827] Peridridia gairdneri

The plant was rubbed on arrows for shine and waterproofing. Buffalo runners chewed the roots to extend their endurance.

[386] Phlox hoodii

Apparently, a dye was obtained from this plant in the way as Evernia.

● 773 824 Pinus spp.

The origin of coniferous forests was told in the story of the woman who married a snake and later pursued her brothers who had killed the snake-being. While the boys were fleeing southward, one of them threw a porcupine tail which magically created a forest that sprang up as a barrier to the woman's detached head which rolled in hot pursuit. The woman had the special power of seeing through anything and soon spotted the boys on the other side of the forest. Meanwhile they prayed for the trees to have children and so replenish the barrier between them and certain death at the hands of the woman. The story continues with the creation of the mountains, etc.

824 Five variations of conifer were distinguished: "curly pine" (from the lichen growths on the branches of Pinus contorta), "mean pine" (also "sweet pine", Abies lasiocarpa), "tomato scent pine" (Thuja spp.), "red pine" (Pseudotsuga menziesii?), and "cedar pine" (Juniperus spp.?).

000 Travois and tipi poles were made from Pinus contorta while the young

18: Wissler E-5 (1903-1912) 1913
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Dance for the Spirits of the Dead.

This ceremony is often spoken of as a ghost dance but seems to be an ancient cult. The idea was to make a dance for the dead to which their spirits were invited. At one stage of the ceremony a herald goes outside to invite the spirits, beginning his announcement by he-e-e, repeated four times. He must not, however, call any ghost by name. The dance seems to be founded upon an incident in the Blood-clot myth,[1] when the hero organized a dance in the stomach of the monster. "When he got into the stomach of the fish, he saw a great many people. Many of them were dead, but some were still alive. He said to the people, 'Ah, there must be a heart somewhere here. We will have a dance.' So he painted his face white, his eyes and mouth with black circles, and tied a white rock knife on his head, so that the point stuck up. Some rattles made of hoofs were also brought. Then the people started in to dance. For a while Blood-clot sat making wing-motions with his hands, and singing songs. Then he stood up and danced, jumping up and down until the knife on his head struck the heart."

The curious idea seems to prevail that the dance is also for those near death or about to become ghosts and that these Blood-clot directed to at least move their heads in unison with the dancers.

The following are two independent narratives of origin myths for the ceremony:—

(a)

A man once pitched his camp far from any others. He had a wife and little boy. After he had been there some time, his wife died. He stayed with her in the tipi for four days and then decided to go away. He took the boy, but before he had gone very far, he heard a voice say, "Go back and stay with your wife. We will help you bring her to life again."

He didn't see who it was that spoke but returned. That night he lay in his tipi and heard people singing and dancing but could see no one. The people he heard dancing were ghosts. They said, "We will dance four nights and restore life to your wife." The man stayed four nights and each night heard the dancers when awake, and saw them in his dreams. After the fourth night his wife lived again. The ghosts gave him the dance and when he returned to his people, he taught them the dance which is still held.

(b)

One time, when a war party was returning after a long journey, one of the members of the party died. His companions made a lodge of brush and trees and left him there. A ghost came to where the man lay and pitied him, invited a number of

[1] Vol. 2, 56.

18: Wissler E-5 (1903-1912) 1913
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794 769 773 173 539 ghosts to the place and said, "Let us all have a dance for four nights and restore this man's life to him." They agreed, and after four nights, the man came to life again and saw the ghosts, how they painted their faces, and how they dressed. One of the ghosts said to him, "We will give you this dance. When anyone is sick or about to die, have a dance, and he will recover." The man returned to his home. After some time someone was very ill. This man gave the ghost dance, and taught it to the people.

794 769 302 The dancers paint to represent skeletons, so it is said. The face and exposed parts of the body are painted white, while around the mouth and each eye is a bold circle of black or red. The effect is quite hideous.

794 769 778 237 824 531 276 532

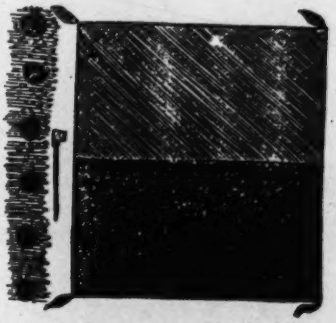

Fig. 28. Smudge Altar for the Ghost Dance. Drawn by Big-brave. The altar is about one foot square, the north half red, the south half black. Red and black plumes respectively are stuck up at the corners. At the west is a row of buffalo chips covered with sage grass. Between these and the altar lies the pipe used in the ceremony. Sweetgrass is used on the altar and the tongs should lie on the north side.

794 769 [292] [796] 794 769 796 535 [789] [302] [778] There are no particular regalia except a plume on the head, nor are there any bundles. The ceremony has, however, its own peculiar ritual and songs. Women dance with the men.

A dance rarely occurs unless some man makes a vow or formal pledge to provide a feast and dance for the dead in return for some expected or realized good fortune. At the ceremony his wife sits near the door and takes the name of Yellow-woman. She paints her hair yellow and her face red with a yellow band across the forehead. On her head, she wears a plume. A great abundance of food is expected.

The smudge altar is a large oval with the incense hearth at one end. At the other is placed a small pipe and four plumes. According to Big-brave the altar was square, Fig. 28. One member is delegated to attend to

593 My husband used to get mad at me for crumbs of bread that used to be all over the bed.

THE HOLY WOMEN AMONG MY GRANDMOTHERS

771 All of my traditional grandmothers prayed a lot and believed in their religion. To me they were all holy women,
793 living a sacred way of life. But there were special ones among
796 them who were revered by the rest of the tribe as holy women. These were the sponsors of the Sun Dance, or medicine lodge ceremonies. That is the highest religious event among my people, and it is always sponsored by a noble woman who has been true to her husband and otherwise upstanding in life. This fact, by itself, has long helped women to have a special standing in our tribe.

773 The legend of the medicine lodge ceremony has been handed down from our long-ago ancestors. Even today most of our people know at least some parts of it. I have heard long versions told by several of my elders. This legend is perhaps comparable to the story of Christmas among Christians. It tells our people that Sun is the main representative of the Creator. It also tells how some of our long-ago ancestors were
[771] taken up to Sun to bring back blessings for our people. Much of our religion centers around the wonderful stories and ceremonies that were brought back from Sun. Each holy woman
796 who has sponsored a Sun Dance has represented one of the
793 legendary messengers from Sun. Thus the holy women are also known as Sun Women, and the holy lodges they build are also known as Sun Lodges. All the people gather to help build these lodges, in the middle of summer, when Sun is
[361] closest to our country. In the old days this was about the only time in the year that all the bands of the tribe assembled in one place, together. Everyone could go before the

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a prayer. He said to me: 'Here is some tobacco. I give it to you along with the sacred bundle that hangs over the door. From it you can take tobacco whenever you want.' 778 425

"I felt proud of his having given such a fine present. I hurriedly took the tobacco to White Calf and gave him the message. He looked at me strangely (because taking the medicine pipe meant much expense and responsibility, but he was obligated to go ahead because of the way it had been presented to him) and said: 'Go back to Four Bears and tell him: White Calf made a vow in his youth, that if anyone ever offered him a medicine pipe he would take it.'

"I told Four Bears what White Calf had said, and he right away got a party of men and marched to our tipi with the bundle, singing, drumming, and rattling. Four of them put a robe around White Calf and carried him back to the tipi of Four Bears. There they had the transfer ceremony for the bundle.

"Shortly after this ceremony five Gros Ventres attacked our camp and took some horses. White Calf followed them with a band of our warriors and they killed all of them. He took their scalps and we had a Scalp Dance with them. That was a good sign for us." 721

LEGENDS OF THE SUN DANCE

I have never heard a detailed description of how the medicine lodge ceremony first got started among my ancestors. There is an ancient legend about a boy named Scarface, who is said to have brought back the directions for building the actual holy lodge from Sun. Scarface went on a mystical journey to Sun in order to find help in having an ugly scar removed from his face, so that the pretty girl he loved would marry him. Sun removed the scar, gave the boy some great power, and told him to build a copy of his own lodge, Sun's 773 706

773 lodge, among his people. Anthropologists say that my ancestors got the Sun Dance from tribes to the south, who originally got it from the Aztecs of Mexico.

There are several legends that include accounts of the origins of various parts of the Sun Dance ceremony. After Scarface told the people about building the holy lodge, another young man was given instructions to have all the virtuous women assemble by this lodge and confess the times in their life when they were approached by men other than their husbands. They had to give the details of each encounter, but if they submitted to any of these approaches, then they were disqualified. Those who did qualify were instructed to help cut the one hundred buffalo tongues that became the tribal Sun Dance sacrament. Any of these women then became eligible to make the vow necessary for each year's medicine lodge ceremony.

HOW THE HOLY WOMAN'S HEADDRESS CAME TO BE

It is said that these early holy women wore only wreaths of creeping juniper branches on their heads. At that time the ceremony was still quite simple, but later on it became very complex. A major addition to it came with the Natoas, or holy woman's headdress, for which many sacred songs are sung. This is how the origin story for that headdress has been handed down.

There was once a cow elk who left her husband and ran away with another bull. Her husband wanted to have her back, so he went around to different birds and animals and asked them to help. The moose and the raven were the only ones who were willing. Since they were in the thick forest by the mountains, the raven offered to go look first. He flew away and stayed gone for four days before he returned with the news. He said he had found the runaway couple and, with

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his own power, he had caused them to stay in the area where they were.

The husband became afraid to challenge his rival, so he asked the moose and raven how they could help. The moose said: "With my heavy horns I have the power to strike very hard." The husband was encouraged, so he said: "With my big horns I have the power to hook very hard." The raven just said: "Don't worry, the three of us can overpower him." So they started for the place where the couple had been found.

When they got close, the husband again became afraid of his rival. He said to the moose: "How is that raven going to help me if I get in trouble? He has only the wings that he flies with." At that the moose began to worry also. Soon the raven flew down and told them: "The ones we are after are just ahead, by a large cottonwood tree."

The elk walked toward his wife and rival, the moose followed close behind, and the raven flew overhead. All three were singing their power songs. With each step that the moose took, his feet went farther into the hard ground. This was proof of his strength. When the elk got up by his wife he hooked at the large cottonwood tree and knocked chips from it each time. Then the moose came up and rammed the tree with his horns and gouged it deeply. At that point the rival elk hooked the big tree and sent it crashing to the ground. Now the husband and his friend the moose were greatly frightened, and decided to make friends with the other elk. Only the raven wanted to continue with the challenge. But the moose told the husband: "This elk has too much power for us, so we had better go ahead and make friends with him. What can this raven do to help us, since he only has wings to fly with?" The husband replied: "Yes, you are right. I will present him with my robe and my headdress." To this the moose said: "I will give him my hooves." The raven shrugged with disappointment and added: "All right, then I will give him my tail feathers. If you had agreed with me to continue

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the challenge, I was going to land on his head and use my large beak to peck his eyes out. You two could have easily won after I made him blind."

When the other two heard this they changed their minds and said: "Let us go ahead and challenge him, then," but the raven said it was too late, since they had already given in to their own cowardice. Meanwhile, the other elk was listening to their conversation, and he became scared of the raven. He decided to accept the gifts while he was ahead. So they gave him their gifts, the husband took back his wife, and the other elk went on his way.

It is a mystery how this first elk happened to have that headdress, but it was a Natoas like the holy women wear for the Sun Dance. It had a rawhide band which held large plumes and feathers to represent the elk's power of hooking with his horns. But since bulls already have horns, the headdress was made for a cow elk to wear, along with the robe that was also presented.

The elk that received the presents had no wife who could wear these things, so he decided to give them to the people who were camped nearby. He changed himself into a man and he brought the articles to the people. He taught them the ceremony for their use, and he told them that they must always put up a small cottonwood tree where they could imitate the challenge that he had gone through to get the presents. To this day that challenge is reenacted during each medicine lodge ceremony.

The man to whom this first Natoas was given was a great holy man who also had the first beaver bundle. He put the sacred headdress in with his bundle and let his wife wear it whenever the bundle's ceremony was held. He was also the leader of the medicine lodge ceremony, since he was such a wise man. His wife wore the Natoas for that ceremony as well. When the holy women who vowed the Sun Dance learned about the power of the beaver bundle man's wife's

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headddress, they asked to borrow it for each Sun Dance ceremony to wear on their own heads. So it came to be that this ceremony was transferred to the Sun Dance women of long ago, who replaced their simple juniper wreaths with this powerful and sacred headdress.

In the old days there were sometimes four or more women who vowed to build the Sun Dance for the same year, and all of them went through the whole ceremony together. Since each one had a Natoas bundle there were probably as many as ten or twelve of these at a time. Today I know of only one each, among three of our divisions, while the fourth division must borrow one whenever they wish to have a Sun Dance again. Unfortunately, I also know of a half dozen such sacred bundles that are in museums or in the hands of private collectors.

The sacred articles for each Natoas are protected inside of a sturdy rawhide cylinder, which has painted designs on the outside, and a row of fringe along one edge. Only two of the sacred articles are kept outside of this bag—a special "turnip-digging stick" and a bunch of moose hooves—and they are tied to the fringe. The rest of the articles are wrapped in cloth inside of the rawhide case. Typical contents include a badger-skin bag for the headdress; weasel, squirrel, and gopher skins for the ceremony; bags of sacred paint, and bags of fat for mixing the paint with; rawhide rattles, and a sheet of rawhide for beating the rattles on; a forked stick for bringing hot coals to the altar, and bags of incense for use on the altar; a special elkhide robe for the holy woman to wear during the Sun Dance; and a tripod to hold up the whole bundle when it hangs outside. Some of the small bags within the bundle also hold necklaces, feathers, and other articles that are used during the bundle's long ceremony.

There is a Natoas bundle opened up and on display in the Museum of the Plains Indian, a government-owned institution located in Browning, Montana, on the reservation of our

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Blackfoot relatives. One year we traveled to that reservation with Mrs. Rides-at-the-Door, for a Sun Dance that she helped to transfer. She was shocked when we brought her to the museum and showed her the opened bundle. To her that bundle represented the sacred life to which she has been devoted, for the sake of her people. Her own Natoas is always kept hanging over her own bed, closed up and covered by a woolen shawl. She nearly cried when she said: "Do these museum people have no respect for anything?" She didn't know that the museum's curator was himself an Indian.

HOW THE MORNING STAR CONTRIBUTED TO THE NATOAS

One of our people's ancient legends concerns a young woman who became married to the morning star. This woman stayed up in the heavens with Morning Star for a time, and when she came back down she brought along a sacred turnip and a special stick of the kind my grandmothers used for digging wild turnips out of the ground. She was instructed to put these articles with the holy woman's bundle, and they have been used in the Sun Dance ceremony ever since. Here is how it came about.

One night two young sisters were lying down outside their lodge, looking up at the sky. One of them pointed to Morning Star (the North Star or Jupiter), and said: "I wish I could have that beautiful bright star for a husband."

A few days later these same two sisters were out gathering wood. One sister had trouble with her pack strap breaking, when she tried to carry her load of wood back home. The other sister finaly said: "I will go ahead with my load and you can follow me." The one who stayed behind was the one who had wanted to marry the star. As soon as her sister was gone, a handsome young man came out of the brush toward her. She got up to run away, but he stepped in her way and

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told her: "The other night you wished to marry a bright star in the sky. I am that star, my name is Morning Star." He had an eagle plume tied in his hair, and he held another one which he tied in the girl's hair. She fainted, and when she revived she found herself in a strange place, far from home.

Morning Star introduced his new wife to his parents, who were Sun and Moon. They welcomed her, and the old woman, Moon, gave her a digging stick and said: "You can go out for walks and dig turnips at the same time. There will be no one to bother you, so you can do what you wish, except for one thing: Do not dig up that great big turnip growing far out from here. That is a special, sacred turnip that must not be pulled up."

The girl did as she was told, everyone treated her very kindly, and she was happy in her new home. She had forgotten all about her people and the place where she came from. She even had a child with her husband, Morning Star. Sometime later she was sitting outside, and she began to think about the large sacred turnip. Since no one ever went near it, she thought they would never know if she just dug it up to look at, then put it back in its place. She had never seen a turnip anywhere near that size. So, while her baby was crawling around and playing, she went over and worked on the turnip with her digging stick, until she was finally able to pry it loose. However, she didn't have enough strength to lift the turnip out of its hole, and her digging stick was wedged in so hard that she couldn't pull it out, either. She sat down, worried, and wondered what to do.

While she was sitting, two large white cranes flew down to her. They were sacred cranes, and they had come to help her. The one crane said: "I have spent all my life with my husband and have never been with another. For that reason I have the power to help you." This crane then made incense and taught the young woman some songs and a ceremony, during which she removed the root digger as well as the large

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turnip. The young woman looked down the hole where the turnip had been, and she could see the camp of her people, far below. Suddenly she became lonesome for her relatives and she longed to go back down to them. The crane told her: "Your husband will allow you to go back home. Take along this digging stick and use it during the Sun Dance, which you will be allowed to sponsor when you get back among your people."

When she got back to her husband he knew right away what had taken place. He said: "I do not want to give you up, but I will let you return to your family because I know that from now on you will be lonesome. Take our son with you, and he may become a leader among your people. But you must not allow him to touch the ground for seven days after you have returned, or he will turn into a puffball and come back up here to live as a star." Then he tied the eagle plume back on his wife's head, and she was mysteriously brought back to earth with her baby.

The young woman's parents were happy to have her back alive, since they had assumed she was either dead or captured by some enemy. They were amazed when they heard her story, and they marveled at their new grandchild. The girl told them that the baby was not to touch the ground for seven days. She told her father to paint a sign on his tipi, as Morning Star had instructed, to remind them all of this taboo. The father painted a large cross at the top of his lodge, in back, and ever since then the painted lodges of our people have had a sign there for the Morning Star.

Six days went by without mishap, but on the seventh day the young mother left her baby behind, while she went out to get wood. The grandmother forgot about the taboo and let the baby crawl on the tipi floor. When the mother came back she didn't see him, so her mother said: "The last time I saw him he was playing under that buffalo robe." His mother quickly pulled back the robe, but all she found was an ordi-

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nary puffball, like those that grow all over the prairie. That night she looked up and saw a new bright star in the sky.

After some time passed, this same woman made a vow to put up a Sun Dance. Along with the other articles used by the holy woman, she carried her sacred digging stick and a fresh tall leaf of the wild turnip. She taught the others the ceremony that went with them, and these things have been carried on to this day. In addition, she painted round circles all the way around the bottom of her father's lodge, in memory of her little child. Most painted lodges now have these circles, and that is why they are called puffballs, or fallen stars from the sky.

A GRANDMOTHER WHO HAD THE POWER TO CALL GHOSTS

When my father was young he spent a lot of time with his mother's brother, Willie Eagle Plume. This same man spent a lot of time with my husband and me in the last years before he passed away. His mother was named SikskiAki, which is the name that I am known by in the Blackfoot language. He gave my husband the name Natosina, or Sun Chief, which had once belonged to his father. Shortly before his passing he gave our youngest son his own name, Atsitsina, or Prairie Owl Man, to complete a trio of names that had been around him since childhood.

Willie Eagle Plume's father was also known as Eagle Plume. He was born around 1850 to a woman whose name, Otsani, can no longer be translated. She was one of several wives of a chief named Not-Scared-of-Gros-Ventre-Indians. Some early trader misunderstood her name, Otsani, and thought it was Old Charlie, which became her nickname for the rest of her life.

Otsani lived to a very old age, spending her final years in

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Myths and Legends of My Grandmothers

ONE OF MY FAVORITE childhood memories is sitting by my grandmothers and hearing them tell us kids the many different myths and legends that have been handed down from my ancestors. Just like the fairy tales of other peoples, our legends let childhood imaginations do the impossible. However, many of these legends gave as much entertainment to the adults as to the children. In fact, many were specifically adult legends, full of suggestive topics and tribal adventures. In keeping with our tribal traditions, I cannot tell these legends in a public place, such as this book.

Although wars and fighting are popular topics for primitive legends, the ones that I have learned have a lot of mystical adventures of women. Perhaps the telling of these was a form of release for my grandmothers, whose daily lives were usually less dramatic than those of the men. Many legends tell of women who married wild animals and had children by them, a topic which could have many more meanings for a life close to nature than we might understand in these modern times.

Many Blackfoot legends involve the origins of our complex sacred ceremonies, medicine bundles, and warrior societies. These stories are further evidence of the high social

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standing achieved by the women in my grandmothers' times. Women take part in most of these legendary religious origins, and they are the recipients of the most important religious rituals that are described. Although virtuousness is stressed in all aspects of our culture, it is interesting to note in these stories that most of the rituals are presented to women after they have had unusual relationships with mystical beings. Usually the rituals are given to the husbands or parents of the women by the mystical beings. This is in keeping with our tribal traditions, which allow a man to regain his honor for violating a wife or daughter by making generous presents to the husband or parents. However, the husband may refuse the presents and take, intsead, the life of the wife or lover, or both.

Another interesting fact about our tribal legends is that they account for the origins of many natural sights and phenomena that children would normally be curious about. In addition to specific origin stories for religious ceremonies and articles, and for such things as stars and constellations, we have the many legends of Napi, in which the origins for everything from the lands and mountains to sewing and tanning are brought out. Lacking the scientific knowledge of the modern world, my grandmothers settled for these legendary origins in any questioning. This kind of attitude might be called primitive by many today, but it worked just fine when the people were mainly concerned with living in harmony with nature, rather than with pursuing scientific theories. In other words, whatever my grandmothers couldn't explain to their children from actual knowledge they explained by the telling of a myth or an ancient legend.

The legends given in this book are only a small sampling of the many that existed. Each storyteller gave a slightly different version, depending on how it had first been told to her or him. Storytelling was a favorite pastime in the old days, and every interesting incident was told and retold. Even in my

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power. He said to the boys that their mother was under the snake's spell and that she would turn into a mean monster when she learned that they knew about it. He told them to run for their lives.

As the two boys were running away they heard a commotion back at their camp, and soon they saw a terrible monster following them. They threw one of the magic articles behind them and a great mountain range formed. The monster had to climb these mountains, but soon it caught up to the boys again. They threw behind another of the magic articles and a great forest formed. The monster had to make its way through the thick trees and brush, but soon it was behind them again. They threw back the third magic article and behind them formed a big swamp through which the monster had a hard time to wade. Finally the boys threw back their last magic article and a huge body of water formed over which the monster was not able to pass. They say this was the ocean. The two boys were now on the other side of the ocean.

Some years passed and finally one of the boys said to the other: "My brother, I am lonesome over here. You stay here and help out the people, while I go back to the other side and see what I can do there." This one that came back over here was named Napi, which means Old Man in Blackfoot. Napi came over and did many mysterious things, some of them very helpful and some of them very cruel and mean. His exploits have been handed down through the ages in a series of tribal legends that are still told today. Many of these legends are so vulgar that only the adults tell them to each other. Napi was the first man to use and abuse women for his own fun and pleasure. He is also credited with making many changes in nature. His favorite camping place was along the foot of the Rocky Mountains, at a place where modern maps show the start of the Old Man River, in southern Alberta, Canada.

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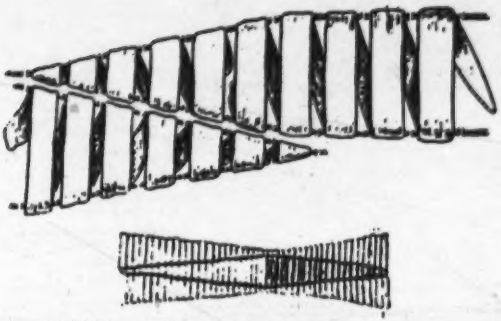

porcupine so that they form patterns and designs. This art was first taught to the long-ago people by Thunder, according to our legends. Ever since then it has been regarded as a sacred craft. Those who wish to learn it and practice it go to an experienced elder to be initiated and instructed. There are yet several people who have been so initiated. However, my mother gave me the common tribal opinion that quillworkers go blind early, and often suffer from internal problems due to some kind of power in the quills.

Porcupine quills were used in their natural shades, as well as dyed. All the main colors for dyeing were obtained from different plants, which were usually moistened, covered with quills, and then wrapped up until dry. By that time the color was usually soaked into the quills permanently. After colored cloth was introduced by traders, in the eighteen hundreds, some people dyed their quills by boiling them with pieces of cloth. Others in more recent times have used commercial dyes.

Quillworkers soak the quills in their mouths to soften them before they are sewed down. Among the basic supplies needed, in addition to quills of various sizes and colors (all kept in separate pouches—traditionally in dried and softened cow bladders), are many strands of rolled sinew, an awl, a

[i.e., porcupine quill decoration--Analyst]

SikskiAki and I didn't ask the Old Man about the contrast between this story and the many sacred stories about Sun and Earth and their children. We knew the custom among our People to see all things in life in many ways—good, bad, and humorous. Many of these stories are not meant to be taken literally but to illustrate that everything in life can be seen in different ways. A common example of this attitude is the joking and fun-making that sometimes erupts spontaneously when a serious participant makes an error in the middle of a sacred ceremony. Human nature is often allowed to take precedence over serious ritual. If human nature causes people to laugh, then they should be allowed to laugh. Laughter, too, is a holy Way among people who live in harmony with nature.

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Lazy Going Man's 2 children were brought in and painted, then both were mounted upon a horse. Their father stood up and presented a rifle to the outgoing "hide cutters" party by laying it upon the ground. His wife and others also made various presents of lodge furniture and wearing apparel. 796 431 852

Lazy Going Man was a close friend of Gambler, the new hide-cutter. By contributing presents to the past hide-cutter, he was helping Gambler assume his new duties. At the same time, he obtained the right to help his friend with the sacred hide-cutting. Having his children painted was to give them the inspiration to look for success in later life. [424] [302]

The hide was then uncovered and spread out; Gambler stood up before it and made a speech. He, Strangled Wolf and Lazy Going Man each counted 4 coups . . . holding the knife in hand as he did so. . . . Gambler, assisted by others, cut up the hide. Beginning at the tail, he cut around the edge and continued cutting until the whole hide was made into a single, long thong about an inch in width, the tail being one extremity. To the tip of the tail was tied an eagle tail feather. The offerings were now all brought from where they had been piled behind the A:Kax [Medicine Lodge] and were tied to the ends of all the rafters. Many of the offerings were also tied to the [top] end of the centre pole, as it lay, and others were wrapped and tied about the middle. . . . The tail end of the raw hide was now pulled along and made fast to the top end of the centre pole, in such a manner that the ox-tail [beef hide] would hang near the ground when this pole became erect. The raw hide was then all cut into lengths sufficient to tie the smaller poles together . . . and several men went to work tying them. 796 281 [555] [237] [782] [346]

The tail left hanging down from the Center Pole represents the tail that hung from the bot- 796 346 773

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tom of the rawhide rope Morning Star made for his wife—in the very long ago—so that she could come back down to her home on Earth and bring the Medicine Lodge ceremony to the People. 796 346 [773]●

A strange sight next appeared. Four processions of young men approached from the lodges, one from each of the cardinal points. Each procession was made up of pairs of young men, walking, each pair behind the other. Each man held aloft a lodge pole, which was strongly connected at the top to the pole of his companion. So in all 4 of the processions, the poles of every pair of young men were tied together, a foot and a half or two feet apart. They approached a few yards at a time until, when within 50 or 60 yards of the Sun-Lodge, they changed their formation from column to line. This resulted in the ends of their 4 lines uniting so that they, as a whole, formed a large circle, the centre of which was the half erected medicine lodge. The completion of the lodge by raising the heavy timbers in place [with their lodge poles] was the errand of all these young men.

We are here in the midst of a symbolic battle. The young men with their lodge poles represent the warriors of the tribe, the tribe's defenders, carrying their weapons. The warriors are about to converge upon the Center Pole, representing the enemy, and overpower it by raising it up. This is symbolic of the People's power to triumph in battle. The holy people wait by the Center Pole to lend their spiritual power to the victory. The husbands wear the black paint worn by a victorious war party. [302]

Completing the Medicine Lodge follows: [822] [727]

The A-Kax [holy party] now left their positions and entered the circle; the black men each carried the scalps tied to a short stick, climbed upon the resting centre pole and, all bending their heads close to the top and covering their heads with their blankets, prayed silently. At the [782]

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LEGENDS OF NAPI

Our second evening of the encampment at the Belly Buttes was beginning. We were in a mood to hear some old-time stories, so we decided to visit Mokakin and see if we could inspire him to tell us some. It is a tradition among our People that myths and legends should be told only at nighttime. It is said that early blindness comes to those who disobey this custom.

Stories of war and adventure have always been popular among our People, especially the men. Women and children, too, have their favorites. But the most well liked of all are the stories of our legendary Napi, or Old Man, whose mythical experiences are exciting and occasionally gruesome. Some of the most popular of them are obscene.

The word *Napi* is used in a number of ways in the Blackfoot language. It can mean "friend," if the *a* is pronounced "ah" and the *i* is drawn out properly. A common greeting among acquaintances, for instance, is, "*Oki, Napih.*" It may also be used to greet an old man, if the word is pronounced with a longer "ah" and a very short *i*. This generally refers to a very old man. A man just old would be more commonly called *Omach-Kinna*, which means something like "big-aged man." Napi is pronounced with a short *i* when it is used to refer to the Old Man of legend. Finally, many of our People refer to our holy Sun as Napi, or Old Man, in their prayers. Because of this and the stories about Napi creating our part of the world, many observers have written that our People thought of Napi as God and prayed to him. Long, long ago, it is likely that our People believed that in the Sun was the spirit of an Old Man, to whom they gave thanks for the beginning of Earth. But the Napi of our myths and legends is a humorous prankster and trouble-maker. He is not the Napi referred to in our prayers.

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So we went to call on Mokakin next door. He was resting and Ponah was nearby visiting her sister, Mrs. Red Crow. He asked SikskiAki to pour some tea for us all from the kettle by the fire.

To start the conversation Mokakin said, "*Ah, Tsanitappi?*" He meant, "Yes, well, how are things going?" "*EkSokahpi,*" we replied, "Very good." I asked him if he could tell us any Napi stories. He told us, "Oh, I know lots of them. My grandmother taught them to me. My uncle, Eagle Ribs, he used to be real good at them—everybody knows him for that. That white man—we call him Long-Nosed Crow [Wilson]—he used to write them down when my uncle went to his store to tell him some. . . . Oh, I wish I could read good—I would have kept those stories and I could tell them to you just like my uncle did."

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He didn't know that I had copies of those stories in a trunk at our tipi next door. I got them from the Glenbow Archives in Calgary. They had hired Philip H. Godsell in 1958 to edit Wilson's papers and combine them into a typewritten volume. When I told Mokakin about this he was anxious to have me read them.

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I went to our tipi for the papers with Eagle Ribs's stories. As I read them to Mokakin he made a number of additions and variations. Our traditional stories always vary according to the person telling them. So, as I read each story to Mokakin, he made remarks here and there, in effect telling me his version of the same story. Therefore, I will now pass on to you the stories of old Eagle Ribs, as recorded by Wilson and, in a way, edited by the present Eagle Ribs (Mokakin).

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NAPI TEACHES THE PEOPLE TO USE BUFFALO

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It used to be that buffalo ate People. Napi found the People hiding in the mountains, where the buffalo could not find them. He told the People: "This is not right. You were meant to hunt the

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buffalo, not to be eaten by them." So he taught the People how to make bows and arrows of wood and how to chip arrowheads from flint. When all the People were armed in this way he led them out on the prairie near a herd of buffalo. He then changed himself into a calf and told the buffalo about the People nearby. The buffalo used to drive the people into a pound where they could butcher them easily. Two rows of large stones like a V led into this pound. Two of the buffalo would rise up from behind the stone piles, where they were hiding, and the People would become frightened and run farther into the V until they were trapped inside the pound. But this time, when the buffalo came after the People to butcher them, they shot their bows and arrows and killed most of the herd. Only two bulls and a few cows got away. From these few were descended all the buffalo that have since lived. One of the cows that survived was outside the pound before the shooting, applying sacred paint to her face. When the shooting began she took the piece of fat, which she was mixing with the paint, and stuck it between her toes. She also grabbed a piece of human meat—left from the last hunt—tucked it under her arm, and fled. Ever since then, buffalo have had fat between their toes and "human" meat under their "arms."

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After the slaughter, Napi showed the People how to make use of the buffalo. He taught them how to remove the large skins and how to cut up the meat. He told them that all of the meat must be eaten and that they must not waste anything for which they could find a use. He taught the women how to stretch the hides on the ground with wooden pegs, and cut the hides with a flint knife. He showed them how to make a hide scraper from an elk's horn edged with flint. He taught them to soak the hide before scraping, and how to work it by first using mashed brains and later by pulling it back and forth through a loop of three-strand sinews taken from the buffalo's back. After they had tanned a number of

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hides, he showed them how to make a lodge to live in, how to cut the poles, how to set them up, and how to make the beds and other furnishings. He showed the men how to hunt and use pounds, just as the buffalo had done before.

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NAPI GIVES THE PEOPLE DEATH

Some time after this, Napi was standing with a woman by a river. He picked up a buffalo chip and threw it into the water. "As this chip rises to the surface and floats," he told the woman, "so will the People rise and return to life four days after death." The woman picked up a stone and threw it into the water. "As this stone sinks and stays gone," she told Napi, "so should People remain gone once they are dead." Napi agreed. Not long after this one of the woman's children took sick and died. She came to Napi, crying, and said, "Let us have death be as you said, so that my child will come back in four days." "No," said Napi, "you have decided for yourself. As the stone sinks, so will your child stay gone." Since that time the People have always gone and not returned when they died.

NAPI BRINGS MEN AND WOMEN TOGETHER

Some time after Napi saved the People from the buffalo, they separated into two groups—men and women. Napi spent his time with the women, with whom he always enjoyed himself. He showed the women how to build a Piskan, or buffalo pound, at the base of a cliff, so that they could drive herds of buffalo down into it and butcher them for meat and hides. [In the Rocky Mountain foothills, west of Claresholm, Alberta, you can still visit the Women's Buffalo Jump, which is supposed to be the one Napi helped to prepare.] Napi showed the women how to find and eat strawberries, raspberries, and other wild berries. He also showed them how to dry service-

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berries and how to mix them with meat to make pemmican. He taught them how to crush chokecherries between two stones. He showed them how to make a digging stick to gather wild roots like camas and turnips. He told them that they could eat serviceberries from the bush in the fall, and wild tomatoes (rose hips) from the bush in winter. He taught them how to make wooden bowls from the large knots often seen in the trunks of pine trees.

After a long time, Napi decided to pay a visit to the men. He found them camped by themselves and in miserable condition. They made tipis by throwing raw buffalo hides over poles. They wore raw furs for clothing. They made moccasins by peeling the hide from the bottoms of buffalo ankles, like socks, and then pulling them over their own feet and ankles. They tied knots on the toe ends to close them up. They did not know how to furnish their tipis, how to cook, or how to do any other household work. They could only hunt.

After his stay with the men, Napi looked so miserable that the women did not recognize him when he returned. They asked him where he had been and when it was heard that he had come from a camp of men, the chief of the women called him to her lodge. She told him that she was greatly pleased to hear where he came from and that she would like him to return to that camp and invite all the men to come and visit. Napi immediately set out to present the invitation.

The women decided that each of them would choose one of the men for a husband. When the men arrived outside their camp, the chief of the women desired to honor them, so she dressed herself in raw furs and torn clothing and wiped her body with dirt. Then she led her women out to meet the men. She instructed her women not to choose Napi, for she wished to have him for her own. When she saw Napi among the men she walked over and took his hand and planned to

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lead him to her tipi. Napi quickly jerked his hand away and shrunk back, shouting, "Go away, you filthy woman, I wouldn't have you for my wife." The chief of the women was angered and returned alone to her lodge. She quickly cleaned herself and put on her fine buckskin outfit. She braided her hair and incensed her body in the smoke of sweetgrass. When Napi saw this well-dressed woman walking toward the gathering he thought, "My, what a fine-looking woman. I would like to have her for my wife." She walked right up to him and he thought that she was going to choose him. However, she walked on by and chose the man standing next to him. As she left with her new husband she reminded the other women that they were not to choose Napi. Thus, Napi was left alone while all the others became husbands and wives. For many centuries a large pine tree stood at the Women's Buffalo Jump. People said that it was the ghost of Napi mourning because he had no wife.

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NAPI AND THE NIGHT HAWKS

[823]

South of Calgary, there is a place the Old People call Where Napi Slept. The shape of Napi's bed can still be plainly seen. Napi and Kit Fox were taking a trip through this area. They came to the top of a high hill, where Napi told his partner, "Let us slide down this hill to save ourselves the trouble of walking." As they reached the bottom, a huge slide of loose rocks came down after them. But they ran just in time. The Old People call this place Napi's Slide. As the two hiked over the hot prairie, Napi decided that his robe was getting too heavy. They passed by a lone boulder, and Napi laid his robe over it, saying, "Here, my friend the stone, take this robe to keep you warm." When they had not walked very much farther, they noticed dark clouds coming up. Napi feared that a thunderstorm was approaching. He told Kit Fox to go back and ask the stone to lend him his robe. Kit Fox went back, but soon

returned. The stone had told him, "Napi gave me his robe, so I don't intend to give it to anyone else." 773 539

Napi sent Kit Fox back for two more unsuccessful tries. Then he went himself and took the robe by force, and they continued on their way north. Napi thought a great deal about his bad treatment of the stone and he worried that something might result. Periodically, he sent Kit Fox up to some ridge to look back and see if the stone was still in the same place. Three times Kit Fox returned and said yes. But the fourth time he came back running and shouting, "The stone is coming after us! The stone is coming after us!" By that time the stone was already rapidly closing the distance between them. Napi and Kit Fox ran as fast as they could, but the stone was still catching up to them. While running, they passed two large buffalo bulls. Napi called out to them, "Help, my friends, stop this boulder or it will kill us!" The bulls stepped into the stone's path, but the stone just rolled them flat on the ground and continued on. Next they passed two very large bears. Again Napi shouted for help. The bears stepped into the stone's path and were rolled over just as quickly as the buffalo. Then Kit Fox noticed a large hole ahead, so he dived into it, expecting to be safe. But the stone rolled over the hole and closed it up, forcing Kit Fox to raise all his descendants under the ground. Now Napi was running for his life all alone.

Above him Napi saw two night hawks flying. He called out to them for help. They considered what they could do and this is what they decided. They dived down and picked up large pebbles from the ground, then dropped the pebbles on the rolling boulder from high in the air. Each time they did this, a piece chipped off the boulder and that made its progress slow down. Before long, the boulder was only a small rolling stone. One more well-aimed shot broke it in two, so that it could roll no more.

Napi traveled on northward with good spirits.

On his way he came across a nest of young night hawks. "Where are your parents?" he asked them. "They are getting food for us," was the reply. Now he knew that these were the children of the two night hawks that had just saved his life. His ornery mood returned to him and he shouted at the young birds, "Your parents have just annoyed me greatly. They had no business spoiling my fun out on the prairie. No one asked them to break that stone apart." And with that he took the young birds and put his fingers in each one's mouth and stretched them wide. Then he took a stone and pounded their long beaks until they were quite crooked, and he said, "This is how your kind will look from now on." And that is why night hawks have large mouths and crooked beaks.

When the old night hawks returned and discovered what had happened to their children, they immediately flew off after Napi. Napi saw them coming and tried to run from them, but they caught up to him and began throwing stones at his robe. The night hawks told Napi, "You will not be bothered by your robe anymore after we are through with you." Each time they threw a stone, a piece broke off Napi's robe, until the last piece was knocked from his hand. As Napi ran, he turned his head to see if the night hawks were still coming after him. At that moment the birds each threw their last stone, which hit him directly in the mouth, knocking out all his teeth. The night hawks then returned to their nest, satisfied that they had revenged Napi's evil treatment. At Rocky Creek, near Calgary, you can still see the pieces of the big stone, lying in a row as they broke off.

□

Ponah returned to her tipi while we were listening to Mokakin's last story of the night. Between stories, she had mentioned that her "old man" had often told Napi stories at home when she was still a child. She remembered sitting around the wood stove during winter blizzards,

summer's encampment. Four is a sacred number, so it was good to see that many of one tipi design. As all four owners happened to belong to the same part of the camp circle, all the Otter Tipis ended up next to each other.

There are different types of Otter Tipis. All have otters symbolically drawn on their covers. The Yellow Otter Lodge, or Tipi, may have only a small Bundle and a few songs. The Yellow-Otter-Flag has a great many songs and a Bundle that includes the decorated skin of an otter. This skin is known as the flag; it is tied to the end of a pole and suspended over the tipi to wave in the air.

According to our ancient traditions, this is how the very first Otter Tipi came about.

THE OTTER TIPI

Long ago a young man went way up north into a country where our People used to live. He stopped by a lake, perhaps the Great Slave Lake, where he lay down to sleep and seek a vision. No dreams came to him while he slept, so the next day he built himself a raft out of the driftwood littering the lake shore. With a long pole, he pushed the raft away from shore, and then lay down upon it and again fell asleep.

While the young man slept, Wind pushed the raft far out into the lake, where Mink swam up to it. When the young man awoke, Mink said, "I have been sent to bring you to my relative's lodge. Follow me." The young man followed Mink into the water and they swam down to the bottom of the lake. When they reached bottom, the young man saw there a fine lodge, painted yellow with many designs. He heard drumming from within. Mink took him inside and introduced him to his relative, Otter. Otter was lying on a bed of tule reeds (a kind of bulrush or cattail) at the back of his lodge. He offered the young man the seat next to him, saying, "I have heard about you looking for holy Power around this lake. I sent my relative up to get you because

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 70-1]

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I take pity on you and want to give you some of my Power." Then Otter took some sweetgrass and made incense on his altar. He told the young man to listen carefully as he sang a number of songs. The young man listened and learned these words: 539 773 532 [533]

Man, he says, my tipi is Powerful.
Woman, she says, my tipi is Powerful.
Rain is my Medicine.
My children, they hear me.
The Earth, below, it is Powerful.

Under water are our tipis.
My tipi, it is Powerful.
My smoking, it is Powerful.

Otter also taught the young man the sacred movements that go along with each song. He gave the young man an otter skin with many fine decorations and taught him how to make otter movements with the skin, and the songs to sing while doing so. He gave the young man a smoking pipe and a drum to use for the otter ceremony. He told him, "When you get back to the camps of your People, you must make all these sacred objects I have shown you, so as to carry on this ceremony properly. You must paint your tipi with the same designs you see on mine. You must make incense often to remind yourself of my holy Power. If you do all these things faithfully, then you may call on my Power whenever you wish." When the young man awoke, he returned to the Blackfoot camps and did as Otter had directed. From that first dream originated all the tipis that now have otter designs.

The sacred Bundle that goes along with an ordinary Otter Tipi (as well as most other painted tipis) contains one or more *Iniskims*—sacred buffalo stones. Iniskims are sacred helpers; they bring good luck. Iniskim songs are sung during the incense and prayer ceremonies. Most families had at least one in their household in the Old Days. 532 778 [777] [533]

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Both-Sides. It now belongs to his son Jim, our present head chief, who stays in it during our Sun Dance Encampments. It is painted blue with two large yellow elk. 532 [114]

The Half-Yellow Tipi, painted half yellow and half red, also was set up at our last Sun Dance gathering. It now belongs to Albert Wolf Child, who plans to transfer it to his son to keep it in the family. Formerly, a variation of it belonged to our Old Man, as well as Mokakin. The Center-of-the-Universe symbol is drawn at the rear of the tipi. [432] [424]

Along with his list, Gambler also recorded his stories of the origin of some designs. Here is his version for the Half-Yellow Otter Tipi. 773 ● 539 532

Oki! The Half-Yellow Otter design—yellow otters around one side and black otters around the other. This tipi was once owned by a man who lived in the water. One day another man sat nearby on a hill; looking down at the river, he suddenly saw tipis emerge from the water. The man from the water told the man on the hill, "This tipi is mine. Jump into the water and go into it. You are having difficult times. I will give you my tipi." The man jumped into the water, entered the tipi, and the transfer ceremony was performed.

Gambler also told this story:

Oki! The Buffalo Head design. A buffalo bull had been killed and all his insides withered away. One time, a man was out on the prairie during a blizzard, so he slept inside the dead buffalo. During his sleep, the man was told, "Don't worry, nothing will happen to you. When you get back to your home draw my head all over your tipi to remind you of the Power that saved you."

In the Old Days, owners were well familiar with the stories and ceremonies for their tipis. This knowledge gave spiritual help and Power to 178 796 532 789

21: Hungry Wolf F-4,5 (ca. 1972) 1977
NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Blood

Our Beaver Bundles and Their Origin

Beaver Bundles were the holiest of all the holy objects helping our People in their spiritual lives. They were the largest, least common, and most complex of all the Bundles, and required the greatest spiritual devotion of their Keepers. 778

Almost every bird and animal was represented in the Bundle, either by tanned skins (from animals specially snared to make their deaths quick and clean) or by special songs and movements. In the Old Days, over four hundred songs were sung when the Bundles were opened. The ceremonies were long and complicated. The Keeper trained constantly, all his life, for such occasions. [237] [533] [796]

In 1909 Dr. Clark Wissler published this account of the origin of Beaver Bundles in an issue of the American Museum of Natural History's *Anthropological Papers*. He credited the story to an unidentified Blood man. 539 773 778

Once there was a man and his wife camping alone on the shore of a small lake. [Probably Saint Mary's Lake in Glacier National Park, Montana.] This man was a great hunter, and had in his lodge the skins of almost every kind of bird and animal. Among them was the skin of a white Buffalo. Because he was always hunting, his wife was often left alone. One day a Beaver came out of the water and made love to her. This went on

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for some time, until she finally went away with the Beaver to his home in the water. When the man came home, he looked all about but could not find his wife anywhere. As he walked along the shore of the lake, he saw her trail going down into the water. Then he knew what had happened. He did not break camp, but continued hunting. After four days, the woman came up out of the water and returned to her lodge. She was already heavy with child. When her husband returned that evening, he found her in her usual place and she told him all that had occurred. 539 773 778

In the course of time the woman gave birth to a Beaver. To keep it from dying, she put it in a bowl of water which she kept at the head of her bed. Eventually, her husband became very fond of the young Beaver and played with him every evening.

Now the Beaver down in the water knew everything that was going on in the lodge. He was not angry because he knew that the man was kind to the young Beaver. He took pity on the man. Then the father of the young Beaver resolved to give the man some of his Medicine songs, in exchange for the skins of birds and animals the man had in his lodge. So one day, when the woman went down to the lake for water the Beaver told her he would visit their lodge and ask for some of their things in his songs. He told her to instruct

her husband to give the things requested. He also stated the time at which he would come to the lodge to be received by her husband. 539 773 778

At the appointed time the Beaver came out of the lake and appeared before the lodge, but, before he entered, requested that the lodge be purified with incense. Then he entered. They smoked. After a while the Beaver began to sing a song in which he asked for the skin of a certain bird. When he had finished, the man arose and gave him the bird-skin. Then the Beaver sang another song, in which he asked for the skin of another bird, which was given to him. Thus he went on until he had secured all the skins in the man's lodge. In this way the man learned all the songs that belonged to the Beaver's Medicine and also which songs belonged to which skins.

After this time the man got together all the different kinds of bird and animal skins taken by the Beaver, made them up into a Bundle, and kept the Beaver Medicine.

Owners of Beaver Bundles were known as Beaver Men. They were always the learned ones among our People. A Beaver Man had to have a fantastic memory to be able to sing the four hundred or more songs in proper sequence. He had to be a man who lived very much in harmony with nature to know the sounds and actions of the many birds and animals within the Bundle, and to be able to coach the participants to repeat those sounds and actions during the ceremonies. Beaver Men learned all the Ways of nature. The People looked to them for knowledge about weather, seasons, plants, birds and animals, and calendar histories (called winter counts) of the tribe. 778 793 [533] [82]

In the Old Days, a Beaver Bundle contained examples of the most important parts of all our other sacred Bundles—a Medicine Pipe, a Natoas headdress, a sacred tobacco-planting outfit, as well as all the various skins. As a result, Beaver Men usually knew all the ceremonies for these other [796]

on to the west side of camp, where they again sat down to await anyone who wished to make offerings. They repeated this at the north and east ends, then returned to their lodge. 575 796 782

The next morning, people would have another opportunity to approach the Motokiks for prayers and blessings, this time in their lodge. There, the prayer seekers would be painted with the Center Pole design. We wished to have Mrs. Red Crow, the society's only remaining Scabby Bull, paint our son Wolf Child, so that he could add this blessing to his young life. [302] [123]

MINIPOKAIKS: THE FAVORITE CHILDREN

That evening, after the camp quieted down, we went next door again to visit Mokakin and Ponah. Eagle Ribs is always happy to entertain his guests with stories and talk. One of that night's subjects was *minipokaiks*—"favorite children." It was a tradition among our People for parents or grandparents to select a child as a favorite, one who showed particular promise to succeed in our Ways, given proper care and Teaching. If the parents of a minipoka went to many ceremonies, the child was likely to grow up to become a ceremonial leader. If the parents went to many social functions, the child was likely to learn much about leadership. Other minipokaiks, however, were simply spoiled and pampered so that they grew up expecting others to help them at the first sign of difficulty. Mokakin told us this legend, The Story of the Abandoned Children, about one minipoka of the long-ago. 574 [517] 593 858 [554] [155] 539 773

This happened a long time ago. I don't know how long. I heard the story told by others when I was young.

Some children were playing in the bushes by the camp. One of the children was a minipoka. His father was the head chief. Everybody was afraid of this chief; sometimes he got a bad temper, but he was Powerful and a good leader.

Oki, the kids were playing in the bushes. The minipoka had to go to the toilet, so he went away from the kids where they could not see him. But the other kids, they wanted to know how a minipoka would take care of himself. So they watched through the bushes. When they looked at him, their eyes got big. What fell to the ground was a big pile of pretty shells, the kind Medicine Pipe Owners wear as a necklace. The children ran out from the bushes and grabbed the shells. They were so excited that they knocked the minipoka down and took all the shells. When he got up, all the shells were gone and the kids ran off through the bushes with them, singing and laughing.

The minipoka started to cry and ran home to his father. When he told his father what happened the chief became angry. Right away, he gave the order for camp to be moved and for no one to call home their children. The People had to do what the chief ordered. By the time the children were finished playing and got back to the camp, all they saw were the smoldering fires where their tipis used to be. They all sat down and cried because they knew that they had been abandoned.

One of our Old People was raised as a minipoka by his influential father. His parents located a young girl from a good family to become his wife, even though he was still a boy and living at home. He became a member of the Horns Society when he was only about twelve or fourteen, which is very unusual. The Old People say that even now he still acts like a minipoka and likes to see things done to suit himself.

While we talked about minipokaiks, Ponah admitted she had been the minipoka of her father, Iron. She said that they had a painted Medicine Tipi transferred to her. When I asked

[p.120-A]

what a little girl did with a painted lodge of her own, she told us: 593 958

"It wasn't a big tipi. It was just a little tipi for kids to play in. My mother made it for me to play in with my friends. My sister and I, we went to boarding school. My mother, she put up the tipi right by the school, and nobody bothered it. She put in a panichtan [lining], and she tanned some little animals and put the skins around the inside for rugs. She even made little bags from rawhide [parfleches] and put them all around the inside. When my mother came to visit us, she stopped on the way at Long-Nosed Crow's [Wilson's Trading Post] and bought a lot of groceries. Then she told me to invite all my friends to the tipi and we had a big dinner. Even the nuns sometimes came over to sit in the little tipi with us." 957 345 [237] [415]

Ponah said that the design painted on the tipi had been dreamed of by somebody and was actually transferred to her. The tipi was painted yellow, with four lines of stars going from top to bottom, one line at each of the four directions. 593 958 952 787

Our conversation wandered on to other things, and of course, Mokakin told us more old Napi stories. 532 432 539 773

ANOTHER NAPI ADVENTURE

One time, Napi came out from a forest and found a bunch of Gophers playing in a meadow. This was how they played: One of them would lie down in an old fireplace and the others would cover him up with earth and then build a fire on top of him. As soon as the fire got too hot, the buried one would call out, "Tsst, Tsst!" Napi asked the Gophers if he could play, and they told him he could. So he lay down in the fireplace and the Gophers put earth over him and built a fire on top of it. As he got warm, he called out, "Tsst, Tsst!" The Gophers uncovered him. Soon it was Napi's turn to build the fire.

Napi said to the Gophers, "I think it's easier

if I cover up all of you at one time." The Gophers all climbed into the fireplace, except one because she was pregnant. Napi made a hill over them and then built a big, hot fire on top of the hill. Soon he heard sizzling and popping and he knew that the Gophers were roasting. When the pregnant Gopher saw what was happening, she ran away. From her came all the Gophers that are living today.

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After the fire burned out, Napi took out the roasted Gophers. He was hungry, so he ate lots of them. But soon he was full, and there were many roasted Gophers left. He decided to take a nap, and then he would be able to eat more. Before he went to sleep he looked down at his rear end and he said, "If anybody comes and tries to steal these Gophers, you make a noise so that I will wake up." Then he went to sleep.

Soon his rear end was thinking, "What will happen if I make a noise?" So it made a little noise, and Napi jumped up right away. When he looked around, he saw there was no trouble, so he went back to sleep. His rear end thought that was funny, so it did the same thing again, only it made a little bigger noise. Napi jumped up, and again seeing nothing, lay down back to

sleep. This happened a few more times until Napi fell fast asleep. 539 773

After a while a Bobcat came along and found the roasted Gophers next to Napi. Bobcat saw Napi asleep and began to eat his Gophers. Napi's rear end tried to wake him up. It made loud noises at first, then really awful noises. Napi didn't wake up, but Bobcat became so disgusted that he picked up all the Gophers and took off.

When Napi finally woke up he saw that all of his Gophers were gone. He became angry at his rear end for not waking him. He took a hot coal [824] *of silverberry wood from the ashes in the fireplace and tortured his rear end with it. That's the reason we don't use silverberry wood in our fires. It smells so bad we call it stinkwood.*

As sometimes happens after the laughter of 000 an amusing story, our minds became relaxed and it was easy for us not to say anything. Our eyes became fixed on the ancient process of fire turning wood into ashes. A breeze softly flagged the canvas lodge cover against the tipi poles. The gentle sounds of evening activity seemed distant. Mokakin began to speak. "Day after tomorrow, my grandson is going to take our old holy Pipe."

Teachings, SikskiAki and I became *Ninamskaniks*, "Medicine Pipe Owners." 778 793

Each article in our Medicine Pipe Bundle is there to inspire holy thoughts about the element of nature it represents. Under the Bundle's plaid shawl covering are several dozen ceremonial objects—decorated sacred Pipestems, a rattle, whistle, sacred paints, shells and beads, and the skins of birds and animals—each with its own song and place in the ceremony. 123

Our sacred Pipe Bundles mean to us what the sacred tablets, Koran, Bible, or rosary, mean to others. They are sacred objects we pray with in our tipi-temples and in our Church of the Great Outdoors. We do not pray to the objects in the Bundles; we pray to the Holy Spirits they represent. [782]

Our grandfather, our Old Man, was Keeper of our sacred Pipe Bundle for ten years. During that time, the Bundle hung over his bed, as it now hangs over ours; it heard his songs, felt his prayers, and bathed in his sweet-smelling incense. When I lean my head against the Bundle and close my eyes, I can see his smile and hear the deep and flowing sound of his voice, and I forget my discouragements and discomforts. We are indeed fortunate, SikskiAki and I, that as we live by his Teachings, his Spirit surrounds us all the time, everywhere. As I tell you about some of the Teachings of our Medicine Pipe Bundles, perhaps then you will understand this special feeling we have for our Old Man and how he helped us to learn so much more about life in harmony with nature.

I'll begin by telling you the ancient legend, as I learned it, about how our People were first given a Medicine Pipe Bundle. 773 ● 539 778

THE ORIGIN OF OUR MEDICINE PIPE BUNDLES

Oki, this story took place very long ago, when our People were able to communicate with all the Powers of the Universe. In the camps there lived

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a beautiful girl who was the only child of her parents. Many young men sent her presents and wished to have her for a wife, but she refused them all. She preferred to remain and help her parents, who were old and poor. 773 539 778

One day a young man came to her and demanded to know why she had refused to accept his courting. When her reply did not satisfy him, he became angry and shouted at the girl, "Do you think that you are too good to marry any of us?" The girl cried as she replied, "I will stay with my parents until I am married to Thunder!"

Not long after, the girl was out gathering firewood. Suddenly a man stepped out from the bushes and stood in front of the girl. He was a fine-looking young man in handsome buckskin clothes. The man said to her, "I have come for you." The girl was frightened and replied, "I cannot go anywhere with you. You are a stranger." The man smiled and said to her, "My name is Thunder, and I have come for you because I heard you telling the People that you would marry me." The girl remembered her statement and knew she had no choice but to go with her new husband.

Thunder took the girl up to his home in the Sky. She stayed with him there, all spring and summer. He was very kind to her and she was happy to be his wife. However, she was lonely for her parents back on Earth. Thunder noticed this and told her, "I know that you are longing to be with your parents and I wish to see you happy. Soon I must go away from here to my winter home. At that time I will send you back to stay with your parents. But I wish to send a present of gratitude to them, and I must first teach you the songs and ceremony to go with it. I will be sending them the most sacred thing I own, my Pipe. It is such a Powerful Pipe that it must be kept covered at all times. It must be taken outside every day so that all the Spirits in the Universe can see it. Its ownership must be shared by your parents, for it is my present to both of them."

Thunder then spent the next seven days in-

structing his wife in the Powers of his Pipe. Each day he taught her one of the songs he sang whenever he took the Pipe from its coverings. Finally he told her, "Each spring I will return for you. My arrival will mean the end of winter's hardships for your People and the beginning of the seasons of plenty. When I announce my arrival, your People must prepare themselves by holding the ceremony that I have taught you with my Pipe."

The girl went back home and gave Thunder's Pipe to her parents. Ever since that time our Medicine Pipes have been thought of as Thunder Pipes, and our People have celebrated the annual return of Thunder in the spring by holding the Pipe ceremonies.

In time, others were instructed to make sacred Pipes similar to the first one given by Thunder. These instructions came through Powerful dreams that were carefully interpreted before being acted upon. Only a man who had great spiritual power would make up a sacred Pipe, and only after he was convinced that his dream gave him positive approval. And the man who was selected to construct the Pipe worked under the direction of the original dreamer. Some people were also taught new songs to sing in addition to the original seven. One by one, the Spirits of different birds and animals also came to the People in dreams and asked to be remembered during the annual celebrations for the coming of the seasons of plenty. Each one offered his skin and his medicine song to be included in the ceremony. That is how our People came to believe in the spirits of sacred Medicine Pipe Bundles.

BUNDLE CONTENTS AND THEIR OWNERS

Unlike the Medicine Bundles of many other People, the contents of ours are not secret; we can discuss them as well as their spiritual powers. We

stepson [Sam Hairy Bull, who sold Eagle Ribs' Beaver Bundle to Edmonton] took the Pipe. The boy got drunk and gave the Pipe to Calling Last for some liquor. Calling Last found out that the Pipe was a fake, s he went and sold it in Browning, Montana. And that was the end of it.

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A BAD PIPE FROM THE GHOSTS

Our People fear the mystery of ghosts. They believe that ghosts are able to make living souls go along with them to the Sandhills, where all ghosts of Blood People are thought to dwell. One Blood man went with the ghosts and returned with a Medicine Pipe they had given him. This story has become a popular legend among our People. Here is Mokakin's version:

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This Medicine Pipe had the name Shaggy Medicine Pipe because it was all covered with eagle plumes that stuck way out. The Pipe was so new, the plumes weren't flattened from being wrapped for a long time.

Oki, this took place a long time ago—I don't know how many years. A man came back home from his war trail and found that his wife was already dead and buried. He had loved her very much and he became very lonely for her. Every night he went up on a hill and cried and mourned. One night a ghost came and spoke to him. "If you want to visit your wife I can take you to her. You've got to bring some tobacco for an offering. But don't bring any weapons or anything made out of metal." Ghosts don't like metal. The man went home and took off his knife and his rings and he picked up some tobacco. Then he went back up the hill. [775]

The ghost took the man a long ways through the dark, over hills and across rivers. Finally they came to a big open place where there was a big tipi camp. The ghost stopped in front of one of the tipis and told the man to go inside and wait. Inside, another ghost was sitting at the back. The

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ghost told him, "Yes, you will see your wife, but don't touch her or even kiss her."

The man was told to look outside the tipi, where he saw his wife walking. He wanted to go over to her, but the ghost told him he could only look. When daylight came everything disappeared and he was alone sitting in a field. He felt pretty lonesome. Then he remembered his offering of Kinnikinnick, so he took it out and said, "Here is your smoke." Something grabbed the pouch from his hand and soon he saw a cloud of smoke next to him. The smoke gradually began to outline people and the tipi in which they were sitting.

After the ghost-man finished his smoke he said, "Man, I have pity for you, so I am going to help you. First, I'm going to let you take your wife back home with you. But you've got to remember four things when you take her. First, don't look back when you leave here; second, don't ask her any questions; third, don't touch her until you take four sweat baths with her; and fourth, never call her a ghost. The man remembered what they told him. Then the ghost-man said, "Now, I'm also going to give you my Medicine Pipe. We're going to open it for you right now and you are going to see it and learn the ceremony." So the man watched and listened to what they did.

When the man left the ghost camp, his woman walked behind him. He didn't look back or say anything to her. After a little while he built a sweat lodge and they both went in it. He saw that his wife's body was just a skeleton.

They went on and on, and then the man built another sweat lodge. This time he saw the outline of his wife's body, but it was all covered with maggots.

On and on they went some more, then he built a sweat lodge for the third time. This time he could recognize his wife's body, but there were still maggots crawling on it.

When they got on top of the hill by their camp, where he first saw the ghost, he built a sweat lodge for the fourth time. When it was

finished his wife's body sat up and she came back to life. They held each other and he kissed her. 778 539

After the man and his wife were home for a while he began to make up the Medicine Pipe that the ghost gave him. For several years his wife took care of the Pipe and they lived pretty good. The man was happy to have his wife back and he treated her very well. Then, one night they had a lot of guests in their tipi and his wife was cooking some food. Just when it was ready to eat, she knocked it over and spilled it all in the fire. The man lost his temper and shouted at her, "What's the matter—can't you do anything right, you ghost woman!" His wife jumped back on her bed and covered up her head with her shawl. The man told her to get up and clean the spilled food. When she didn't get up, he went over and pulled her shawl off. Underneath the shawl there was only the skeleton of his wife. 773 ●

Not long after that the man gave up his Shaggy Pipe to somebody else. Then he died. The one he gave the Pipe to also died. Some more people had the Pipe, and each time they died when they got it or soon after they gave it up. Finally a chief took it to see what he could do. When he died, the People said, "This Pipe came from the ghosts and everybody that has it becomes a ghost, so we better give it back to the ghosts." So they buried the Shaggy Pipe with the chief and they never made it up again. Everybody talks about it since then. [784]

THE BLACK-COVERED PIPES

There was once another kind of Medicine Pipe. These were covered with dark-colored cloth and accompanied by a few accessories in a rawhide bag. They were used to inspire spiritual power for an individual or for a society in times of war. The People did not look to these Pipes or their Owners for everyday spiritual help. 778

There used to be many of these Black-Covered Pipes, but none remain with us today. Most of their individual origins and ceremonies

[p. 166-B]

Let me tell you the ancient story about Iniskims as I learned it from the Old Man. 539 773 778

THE FIRST INISKIM

[731]

In the long-ago, before the People had horses, they sometimes starved when they were unable to move their camps fast enough to keep up with the moving buffalo herds. This story takes place during such a famine.

Three sisters were married to the same man. One day they were out gathering firewood. The youngest sister was carrying a large load of wood when her carrying strap broke. Each time she stopped to fix the strap it broke again. Her sisters went back to their lodge while she tried to fix her strap for the fourth time. As she bent over to fix the strap, she thought she heard a voice singing. She looked around but could see no one. Yet the voice seemed to be coming from very near by. She became frightened and got up to leave, but the voice called out to her. Then she noticed in the direction of the voice an unusual-looking stone sitting up on the ground near her pile of wood. She went over to take a closer look and saw that the stone was sitting on a little bunch of buffalo hair. The voice began to sing again; it came from the stone:

You—woman—will you take me?
I am Powerful!
Buffalo is our Medicine.

The young woman reached down and picked up the stone. In those days the People had no pockets, and she was not carrying her miscellaneous pouch. She put the stone beneath her belt next to her skin and she went home. She did not tell anyone what had happened.

That night, she had a dream. The stone came to her and sang its song again. Then it told her, "I have come to you and your People because I pity you. My Power is able to communicate with the buffalo and bring them here. I have chosen you to bring me to camp because you are humble and I know your thoughts are good. You

must ask your husband to invite all the holy men to your lodge tomorrow night. I will teach you some songs and a ceremony which you must show them. If you do this then I will have my Power bring back the buffalo. But you must warn your People: my Power is always announced by a strong storm, and when it first arrives it will look like a buffalo, a lone bull. You must tell your People not to harm him. The rest of the herd will follow as soon as he has passed safely through the camp.

During her dream the woman was taught several songs she had never heard before. The Iniskim told her that he had many relatives about the prairie, and that all of them were in contact with the same Power as he. He told her that any of the People who wished to have good fortune from this Power should look for one of his relatives and bring them home and treat them with respect.

When the young woman woke up she wondered what to do about her dream, for she was quite shy of her husband. Only the sits-beside wife takes part in the husband's ceremonial functions, never the wife who sleeps closest to the door. When the husband went outside, the young wife told her older sister about the stone and the dream. The sister said, "I will tell our man what you just told me. If your dream comes true, then you may have my seat next to him. But if not, I will only pity you for what you will have to suffer."

When the husband learned of the matter, he immediately sent out invitations to the camp's holy men. In a short while, they gathered in the home of the young woman and were served a small portion of berries, and broth made from scraps of leather. They were excited when they heard why they were invited, although one or two got up and left. Our Old People were always skeptical of someone who claimed to have been called upon in a dream and given a Power.

With the approval of the holy men who remained, the husband asked his young wife to sit at the head of the tipi and lead the ceremony

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that had been shown to her. She had a tiny piece of fat, which she mixed with sacred paint in the palms of her hands. While she covered the stone with the sacred paint she sang one of the songs:

Iniskim, he says: buffalo is my Medicine.

Iniskim, he is saying: I am Powerful!

The men then knew that it was not an ordinary stone, but a sacred stone. They were anxious to see if it really had any Power. The woman then rubbed the Iniskim over her body four times and prayed at great length. Then she sang another song:

This Iniskim, my man, it is Powerful!

During the song she handed the Iniskim to her husband, sitting beside her. He rubbed his body with it and prayed, while his wife continued to sing the sacred songs. The ceremony went on in that way until the Iniskim had gone all the way around the gathered company. By that time most of the men were able to sing one or two of the songs.

Before they left, the woman told them about the warning in the dream. A crier was sent around the camp telling the People to tie down their lodges and prepare for a big storm. They were also told not to harm the single bull that was to show up in the camp after the storm. Most of the People followed the advice, but a few laughed and said it was only the crazy dream of a woman.

It was long after dark when the weather began to change. Most of the People had gone to sleep. Only the husband, his wife, and some of the holy men stayed up and continued to sing the Iniskim songs. A breeze started to blow, rustling the covers of the tipis. Before long the breeze turned into a wind, and the tipi covers flapped loudly against their poles. The wind continued to get stronger, and suddenly the People were all awakened by the cracking sounds of a big cottonwood tree as it was blown down. The unfastened tipis of those who disbelieved the woman were blown down and their contents hurled away. While the People prayed for safety, they heard loud hoofbeats and heavy breathing in the

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darkened camp. It was the lone bull wandering through the camp. No one dared to harm him.

In the morning the storm stopped and there was a large herd of buffalo grazing beside the camp. The People were able to bring down as many as they needed, for the animals just wandered around without alarm. The People cried with happiness for having real food again. They were anxious to replace their worn-out bedding and robes, and to fix the holes in their tipis and moccasins. Everyone paid their respects to the young wife, who now occupied the place next to her husband at the head of the tipi. Everyone brought a tiny offering of buffalo meat or fat and placed it before the sacred Iniskim, which was sitting on a little pile of fur inside of the cleared-earth altar at the back of the tipi.

Ever since then our People have had the Power of the Iniskims.

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Matted buffalo hair wrapper containing the many Iniskims for the ancient Black-Buffalo Painted Lodge, at rest in the Provincial Museum.

Gp.171-B]

stars that are symbolically represented by circles on the smoke flaps of most of our painted Medicine Tipis. 821 [532]

One legend tells of that part of the Great Bear commonly called the Big Dipper. We call it the Seven Brothers. 773 539 821

In the long-ago there was a widowed man who had nine children: six grown sons, a small son, and two daughters, the younger of whom cared for the little boy. To keep the family supplied with food he and his six grown sons went out hunting nearly every morning. As soon as the hunters left, the grown daughter would immediately go off to gather firewood.

As time went by, the younger daughter began to wonder why her older sister always spent so much time gathering firewood, and why she went to do it only while the men were away. So one day she followed her sister into the brush. She was much surprised to see her older sister meeting with a large bear and making love with him for some time. She hurried home, much confused by what she had seen.

When her father and brothers returned that evening, the young girl told them about her discovery. They were quite insulted, as not only had the older sister embarrassed the family by turning down several good men who wished her for a wife, but now she had an illicit husband who was a bear. They immediately gathered their weapons and went after the bear and killed him.

When the older sister learned what had happened to her lover, she was greatly upset. She went to the body of the bear and took from it a part, which she wrapped up and carried next to her own body.

The People in the camp learned about the incident and ridiculed the girl until she became very angry. She prayed to the Spirit of her lover for help, and all at once she turned into a huge bear. She ran through the camp and tore down the lodges and killed most of the People, before the Power left her and she again became herself.

[p.200-B]

The younger sister saw this and became greatly frightened. She put her little brother on her back and ran into the woods to hide. There she encountered her returning brothers, who were in mourning because their father had been killed in an accident while hunting. When they heard what had happened at the camp they were even more grieved. They told their young sister to go back home and secretly gather up spare moccasins and food so that they would be equipped to travel to some distant place together. They told her that they would place cactus thorns in front of the tipi door, leaving a narrow path for her to cross over and making it difficult for their older sister to follow. 773 539 821

The little sister and her brother returned to the tipi and quietly gathered the supplies. But soon the older sister realized what was going on and began to get very angry. The little girl quickly put her brother on her back, grabbed the provisions and ran out the door, carefully avoiding the cactus thorns as she ran. The older sister chased after them but her feet became covered with the thorns. As she hollered in pain, she again got her lover's Power and turned into a bear. At that she chased after the others.

Now one of the brothers had a lot of Power of his own. When he saw that the bear was about to catch up to them he spit over his shoulders, and right away a lake formed behind them. The bear was delayed in going around this water. As she started to catch up again, the Powerful brother took his porcupine tail hairbrush and threw it behind him. Right away a dense thicket was formed, and the bear had a difficult time getting through it. As the bear began to catch up to them once again, they decided to climb a large tree. The bear stood at the bottom and said, "Well, now I will kill you for sure." The Powerful brother took out his bow and arrows while the bear began to shake the tree. Four of the brothers fell out of the branches; but before the bear could do anything to them, it was struck by an arrow between the eyes. Right away the bear turned

back into their sister, but she was dead. 773

The Powerful brother felt sad for having killed his own sister. He said to the others, "Well, we have no one left here on Earth now, so we might as well go somewhere else." The others agreed and asked where they might go. He told them to close their eyes, and then he shot an arrow far into the sky. When they opened their eyes they were all floating in the sk[illegible]. 539 821

Thus was formed the Big Dipper, or Ursa Major. The four brothers who fell from the tree are the four lowest stars in the group, while the other brothers form the remaining three. Some say that the small star to one side of the handle is the little sister, while others say that she married one of the stars of the Little Dipper, and that she is the North Star, or Pole Star. Our People, who call this "the star that never moves," used it as a nighttime compass in the Old Days. 821

Another nighttime compass our Old People used was Morning Star, which the Old People called *Ipisoachs*. In our legends, he is the son of Sun and Moon, which is why he shines during the time between night and day. Like his father, he comes from the east, indicating the arrival of morning.

There is another star that is not quite so bright and comes up before Morning Star; this was called Mistaken Morning Star, for obvious reasons.

The other group of stars usually represented on the smoke flaps of our sacred tipis are commonly known as the Pleiades, but we call them the Poor Children. [532]

THE POOR CHILDREN

In the camps of the long-ago there was a poor family with six boys. They were always dressed shabbily. It was early in the summer season, when men went out every day to hunt and replenish the supply of meat and hides that had been used up during the winter. This was the time most chil- 773 539 821

dren received from their parents new robes made from the soft hides of calves. But the six poor boys continued wearing their old scabby robes because their father was too poor to hunt for any calf skins. 773 539 821

The other children made fun of the old hides worn by the poor boys. The boys were too ashamed to play with the other children and felt that their parents did not care for them. The poor boys wandered away from the camps and were soon lost out on the prairie. The Spirits of the Sky felt sorry for them and invited them to come and live up there. So that is where they went. It is said that they still hide out of shame during the time when buffalo calves are hunted for their skins. That is why they cannot be seen at that time of the season.

The Pleiades, incidentally, are made up of seven stars, but only six can normally be seen with the eye. 821

Our Old People gave Mars the name Big-Fire Star, because of its red color. Mistaken Morning Star, or Venus, was also called Day Star, because it can sometimes be seen in the middle of the day. Morning Star, by the way, is known today as Jupiter.

[p.202-A]

THE PERSON'S HAND

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This legend is about the constellation known as Lynx. Our People knew this group of stars as the Person's Hand.

Two friends were out hunting buffalo, long ago. When they located a small herd, they separated so that they would have a better chance of success in case the herd moved away from them. One of the men shot a cow; the other one got nothing. The one who got nothing came up to his friend who was busy butchering his kill, saying, "Well, friend, I got nothing, so why don't you give me the kidney from your cow." The other said, "No, you scared the herd away. I was lucky to get this one." At that point they began to argue, and the unsuccessful hunter attempted to reach into the cow and grab the kidney for himself. The man became angry, took his knife and slashed off his friend's hand and threw it up into the sky, where it remained to become the Person's Hand. In retaliation, the wounded man cut off his friend's hand, and from then on the People found a section of the buffalo's stomach that they called a person's hand.

And that is all I know and was able to learn about stars.

[p.202-B]

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teeth. A new travois must be provided for moving the medicine woman outfit. Sometimes she herself rides on it. This travois is made by the past medicine woman, her attendant in the ceremonies.

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As previously stated, the natoas ritual in the sun dance has for its mythical basis the Elk-woman and the Woman-who-married-a-star, though Scar-face, Cuts-wood, Otter-woman, and Scabby-round-robe are said to have made minor contributions. Versions of these myths may be consulted in Volume 2, part 1 of this series. The Woman-who-married-a-star is credited with bringing down the digging-stick and the turnip, together with the songs pertaining thereto (p. 61), also a wreath of juniper formerly worn in place of the natoas and the eagle feather worn by the man.

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It is also interesting to note that the Crane-woman who transfers the ritualistic attributes of these objects makes a formal declaration of her marital virtue. In the case of Elk-woman, we have again the incident of the Crane and the digging-stick where it is implied that the latter symbolizes the bill of the former. We are informed that many animals were present at this transfer, each contributing something to the regalia. We also find it suggested that the bunches of feathers on the natoas represent the horns of the elk, the elk robe and elk teeth wristlets further symbolizing that animal. In one version of this myth is the antagonistic implication that Elk-woman was not quite up to the standard of marital virtue. In the Cuts-wood myth the "going forward to the tongues" is accounted for. Scabby-round-robe is credited with adding the necklace and the arrow point to the natoas and Otter-woman with the wild cat-tail.

The following statement of an informant has a bearing upon this point:— [539]

The natoas is said to have come from the Elk. It was first owned by beaver bundle men, but it was the custom for the medicine woman in the sun dance to borrow it for her ceremony. This continued for a time, but ultimately the medicine woman bought it and kept it in a bundle of her own. The feathers on the front of the natoas are said to represent the horns of Elk and the plumes at the sides, the leafy top of the large turnip. This is the same turnip which the woman who went to the sky land is supposed to have dug up. The digging-stick which accompanies the natoas also represents the stick with which she did this digging. Some of the songs in the natoas ritual speak of little children running about and this refers to the ball-like image on the front of the natoas, for this image is stuffed with tobacco seeds, which, as you know, are often spoken of as children, or dwarfs (p. 201). The broad band upon which the natoas is mounted is said to represent the lizard. All these things, it is said, were added to the natoas, one at a time, by some of the beaver men. So it came about that we have the natoas as it is.

Now, as to the story about the Elk giving the Natoas the robe and the wristlets used with it. The objection is sometimes made that this first woman who ran away from her husband to join the Elk was not a true woman and that the facts are therefore inconsistent with the ideal of the natoas ritual. Yet, some of our people claim

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796 773 778 [539] that the woman was true and that though she went away with the Elk it was merely for the sake of receiving the ritual and that this is evident because in the story it tells how she was able to hook down trees by her magical powers and it is not conceivable that she could do this if she had not been a true woman.

796 778 793 [785] The ceremonial transfer of the sun dance bundle really begins with the fasting of the medicine woman on the first day. Neither she nor her husband are supposed to eat or drink while the sun is visible, and then but sparingly. On the evening before, they are put to bed by the father and mother. The mother places the daughter on the south side of the fire and the father the son on the north side. They must remain in the same position until morning. Before the sun rises the father and mother go to the medicine woman's tipi, stand by the door and sing. They sing as they formally enter, the father raising up the son; the mother, the daughter. The man is taken out by the father and the daughter by the mother for the morning toilet. When they return a small amount of food is fed to the son and daughter, after which the father and mother take a little food and drink. This must be before sunrise. During the day the son and especially the daughter must sit quietly in their places with bowed heads and eyes cast down. [292] [302] She wears a buffalo robe, hair side in, painted red, covering her head as well as her body. Her hair is not braided, but hangs down freely except for a horizontal band around the head. The hair may be allowed to conceal the entire face.

796 The daughter must do nothing for herself. If she wishes to speak it must be in almost a whisper in the ear of the mother or other attendant, who in turn will announce the import, if necessary. A fire is kept burning in the middle of the tipi, the ears are closely drawn around the smoke hole, the door closed, and the tipi cover securely staked down at the edges. [237] Though this keeps the temperature high, the medicine woman cannot use a fan, but may use the skin of a muskrat to wipe the perspiration from her face and hands.

796 785 784 During the fasting period no noise must be made in the tipi. All the attendants must avoid unnecessary conversation and speak in a very subdued tone; utensils must not be rattled or struck together. Visitors may enter, but respectfully and quietly. No noises should be made in the vicinity of the medicine tipi and boisterous acts abstained from in all parts of the camp circle. If water is brought in the vessel must be covered. No one should spit in the tipi nor do the other things forbidden at the ceremony of the tongues.

796 [372] [784] Throughout the whole period there is a male attendant. He keeps the fire alive during the night and until camp is moved. He can only start the fire with an ember from some other tipi, striking fire in the tipi being strictly prohibited.

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of resistance. He is then led up to the hides near the front of the medicine woman's shelter. In former times, four such men were brought up for the ceremony. They must have coups to their records, otherwise they would not have been selected. In the ceremony of 1904 we observed an attempt to "catch" a man on horseback, but the struggles of the horse enabled him to escape. In former times, the friends of the interested party would have gathered around the rear and sides of the horse forcing him forward in the lead of the "catcher". This whole catching procedure is said to symbolize the capture of an enemy.

In order to understand the ceremony that now takes place, it is necessary to know that the right to cut the thong is to the Blackfoot a medicine to be transferred for gifts of property as in case of other medicines. The men who did the cutting in the previous year are to "sell", or transfer, this year. It is they who do the "catching", either in person or by deputy. Should no one be brought forward, those who performed the rite on the previous year must again serve. As soon as a man is caught, his relatives are notified; they come out with all kinds of property to support him in the transfer. The initiate is brought into the presence of the present owner of the right, his hands and face are painted, accompanied by ritualistic prayers. While this proceeds, an old man (usually a relative) stands somewhat apart and shouts out praise for the initiate. However, this may be done by a woman, if no man comes forward. A horse and other property is then given to the former owner of the right, whence it ceases to be his. The deputy "catcher", if there is one, then receives a small present or two from the former owner.

The cutting of the thong then takes place. The new owner of the right, standing up by the hide, shouts out his coups. He holds the knife in his hand and while pointing in different directions with it, he tells of a war deed. At the end of each tale he makes a pass with the knife as if to cut the hide. After four deeds are told, he cuts the hide. For example, he may say, "At such a place I captured a horse which gives me the right to cut this, etc." If there are other men with the right, they follow in turn. After this, the thongs are cut with the assistance of other men and distributed at the places where they will be needed. A thong with the tail attached is used to bind the bunch of boughs to the sun pole, the tail hanging down.

While this ceremony is going on, gifts of flour, beef, etc., made by white people are distributed among the old poor people. This is regarded as a recent intrusion.

The following extract from an unpublished version of the Scar-face myth accounts for the thong-cutting ceremony:—

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Her husband could tell by her eyes that she had been crying and he said, "I told you not to dig up that turnip, but nevertheless you have done so. Since you are lonesome and wish to return to your people, I will take you back." Then Morningstar went out and killed some buffalo. After he had skinned all of them he cut the hides into long strands, fastened them together, and tied the woman and her child to one end and let her down from the sky to where her people were.

Before she reached the earth, a little sore-eyed boy was lying on his back, looking up at the sky and saw a very small object coming down. The boy told the men who were playing the wheel gambling game what he saw, but they laughed at him and threw dirt in his eyes and said, "You must see the gum on your eyelids or lashes." As the falling object came closer others noticed it and when it came among the group they knew that it was the woman who was missing from the camp. They untied the rawhide strand and noticed that some of the buffalo tails were on the ends of the long rope which lay piled up high before them.

This woman came down with her digging-stick. As she was not a wicked woman and only stayed with Morningstar as her husband, she gave her digging-stick to the medicine lodge woman and the natoas was named for the turnip she dug up. When the sun dance was held, this woman told them always to cut up a rawhide into strands and tie the posts with them. Also that the center post and the birch on it must be tied with them. The tail of the hide is to hang down from the center post. These rawhide strands are a representation of the rawhide rope with which this woman was let down to the earth. Later, the moose hoofs are tied to this digging-stick. The plumes on the natoas are to represent the leaf of the large turnip this woman dug up while in the sky.

Raising the Sun Pole.

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While the hide is being cut, all the woman who made vows to take some of the tongues come forward to the parfleche placed near the medicinemen and women. Each woman takes one of the tongues and stands with the person for whom her vow was made and makes a confession to the sun in a loud voice, so all may hear. Then she prays to the sun for the beneficiary. After all the women have taken their tongues, some of the men tie the cloth offerings to the ends of the poles and a bunch of birch is tied between the forks of the center pole.

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The preceding ceremony comes to a close as the sun gets very low. About time for the sun to set, a procession of pole raisers starts from each of the four quarters of the camp circle. Tipi poles are tied near the small ends in pairs, each pair carried by two men. The four parties advance in unison by four stages and at each pause sing a special song. In the last move, they rush upon the sun pole and raise it in place. In the meantime, the father and son go and stand on the center pole while their wives stand to the west. The men make wing movements with their arms toward the east. According to some informants, the medicine woman may make hooking motions at the pole, to symbolize the mythical Elk-woman.

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796 533 to represent the number of different songs used in the ceremonies of the medicine woman. There are 413 which is said to be the full number of songs. These, as has been stated in Volume 7, are in reality a part of the beaver bundle ritual.

The singing at the dancing ceremonies after the sun lodge has been erected is usually confined to the songs of various societies concerned. There are, however, a few with characteristic airs that are regarded as peculiarly appropriate to the occasion, regardless of who may be dancing.

The Sun Dance Camp.

361 62 796 In a previous paper, we called attention to the belief that the camp circle was formed expressly for the sun dance. Our informants say that formerly the circle was formed by the assemblage of the bands some time before the medicine woman began her fast. In winter, the tribes scattered [221] [203] out, usually two to five bands in a camp, often many miles apart. At the approach of summer, the husband of a woman having made a vow to give the sun dance sends a man to look up the camps and invite them to join his band. He carries tobacco and presents some to each head man with the invitation. As the head men receive the invitation, they order their bands to move, forming the circle at the medicine woman's camp. Once formed, the circle is not broken until after the sun dance, a period estimated at from two to four months. The whole body may move about and even make long journeys aside from the four ceremonial moves required while [221] the medicine woman is fasting. After the sun dance, they split up into parties for the fall hunt and finally went into winter quarters. The import of our former statement is thus apparent. The suggestion is that the camp circle is intimately associated with the sun dance. At least, one point is clear, the camp circle is initiated by the woman who starts the sun dance and even so is one of the preparatory steps.

As previously stated in Volume 7 of this series, there is much uncertainty as to the order of bands in the circle. We doubt if it ever was absolutely fixed beyond change at the will of those in charge of the sun dance proceedings.

Mythological Notes.

773 796 The way that several distinct myths are used to account for different features of the sun dance might be taken as a suggestion that the ceremony grew up among the Blackfoot. We suspect, however, that we have here an example of pattern phenomena. Those familiar with the detailed

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773 796 study of rituals in Volume 7 will recall that tradition recognized the obvious fact that rituals were not produced all at once, but grew by accretions. This is so marked in the mythical accounts of ritual origin that we may suspect its appearance in the mythology of the sun dance. On page 241 we have enumerated the myths accounting for important features of the ceremony. Among these are not included the parts taken by societies or the cutting sacrifices, they, as we have stated, not being regarded as integral parts of the sun dance.

For the sake of completeness we offer some extracts from an unpublished version of the Scar-face myth:—

We will take up this narrative at the point where Scar-Face has killed the cranes and reported with their scalps. We are told that had not Scar Face killed these birds, they would always have killed people, but that since he overpowered them they now fear people and have done so ever since.

539 773 796 Now, the Sun, the Moon, Scar Face, and Morningstar had a scalp dance while the Sun and Moon sang the praise songs in honor of Scar Face. The Sun addressed Scar Face: "When your people kill enemies they should scalp them and then give a scalp dance. Whenever anyone counts coup or recounts his war experiences, the praise songs should be sung." We have followed this custom ever since. Whenever anyone related his war deeds, some old men or old woman sang the praise songs, repeating the narrator's name during the singing.

The Sun was pleased with Scar Face. He directed Morningstar and Scar Face to build four sweathouses, standing side by side, with their entrances facing east. When they were completed, the Sun, Morningstar, and Scar Face entered one of them, the Moon remaining outside to close the door. After the Sun had worked over Scar Face, he ordered the moon to open the door and they went into the next sweathouse, again choosing the moon to be the door attendant. Now, the Sun asked the Moon to point out her son. The Moon designated Morningstar. They moved into the third sweathouse where the Sun had Morningstar and Scar Face exchange seats. Again, the Moon was asked to pick out her son. Though she noticed that the scar on the young man's face had disappeared, she pointed to her own son. They proceeded to the fourth sweathouse. Again, the Sun had the two men exchange places. The Moon looked in and pointing to Scar Face said, "This is Morningstar." The Sun replied, "You have mistaken him for Morningstar, the other is our son." Ever since that time, Scar Face has always been called Mistaken Morningstar.

Then the Sun gave Scar Face a buckskin suit decorated with porcupine quills. On the breast and back of the shirt were quill-worked rosettes representing the sun; the side seams of the leggings and sleeves were covered with strips of quillwork three or four inches wide. In addition, the sleeves and leggings bore hair fringes representing the scalps of cranes killed by Scar Face. The Sun also gave Scar Face a bow with a lock of hair fastened to one end, a whistle made of a hollow reed, a bladder, and the robe worn by Scar Face. To represent the scalping, the Sun painted the upper part black. The whistle and the bladder were to be used on the woman who had refused Scar Face. The bow too, is a reminder of the killing of the cranes and is still used in the sun dance lodge. The Sun gave Scar Face a circle of creeping juniper which the women that build the lodge (the sun dance or medicine lodge) are to wear on their heads.

23: Wissler E-4,5 (1902-ca.1911) 1918
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539 793 796 The Sun told Sear Face of the sun dance, the lodge, and the sweathouse, and added, "When you return to your people and wish to make an offering to me, you must first build a sweathouse and there make your offerings. Then I will hear your prayers and accept them. You may also make offerings to me in the sun dance lodge. He covered Sear Face's face with the "seventh" or red paint, drew a black circle around his face and a black dot on the bridge of his nose, and a streak of black around each wrist. He said to Sear Face, "This is the way the people must paint when they make offerings to me in the sun dance lodge. For the victory or scalp dance they must paint their faces black." The Sun also gave him a necklace, in the center of which were strung two small shells and a pendent lock of hair, flanked on either side by four beads. This is the necklace worn by the husband of the woman owning the natoas. The Sun's lodge was made of white buffalo robes and some the color of beaver skins. The door of the Sun's lodge faced the east. For this reason, tipis were always turned so the doors faced east. Now Sear Face decided to return to the place where Spider waited.

The narrative then proceeds in the usual way, except that the hero calls all the men of the camp to take revenge on the young woman after which he by magic turns her into a cripple.

The Blood and North Blackfoot.

796 184 The writer has upon two occasions seen the ground where a Blood sun dance had been held. The dancing lodge, the sweathouse, etc., were still standing and all these were just as noted among the Piegan. The Blood lodge was a little larger, but the Piegan said that it was formerly so with them, they now having very poor timber to work with. We have in addition two brief published accounts of eyewitnesses.[1] The chief difference we could detect was in the secondary dances of the society where the Horns and the Matoki[2] took a very prominent part. As there are now no such organizations among the Piegan, this gives merely an outward appearance of difference. [575]

The Northern Piegan, as may be expected, also had the same form. As to the North Blackfoot, we have only the statement of other Indians that the sun dance was the same. The Sarsi[3] also had the very same form and we may suspect the Kutenai as well. At least, my Piegan informants asserted that the Kutenai had the sun dance from them. The problem here, however, must rest until we have more data, though Hale is of the opinion that the Blackfoot gradually displaced the Kutenai and took over many Plains traits from them.[4] 796 171

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[1] McLean, *ibid.*, 231–237; McQuesten, *ibid.*, 1165–1177.

[2] This series, volume 11, 410–418, 430–435.

[3] Goddard, Pliny Earle. "Sarsi Texts" (*University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology*, vol. 11, no. 3, Berkeley, 1915), 192–193.

[4] Hale, H., "On the North-Western Tribes of Canada" (*Report, Fifty-seventh Meeting, British Association for the Advancement of Science*, 173–200, London, 1888), 198.

24: Schultz F-3 (1877-1947) 1980 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

000 We rode up the coulee, keeping out of sight of the herd until, at the head of the coulee, we charged out and right in among them. They instantly ran, gathering compactly together, and we, choosing the cows that we wanted, always those with rounded hips and rump and therefore fat, turned our horses after them. And our horses were as eager for the chase, for the killings, as were we. With ears set fiercely back, they did their best to get us close up to the left of the cows, so that we could put a single, killing shot into their lungs or hearts. The pace at which we were going seemed to us like the swiftness of lightning. Well we knew that, at any moment, our horses might step into a badger hole and we go down to be trampled to death; that a hard-pressed bull might turn and gore us. It was that danger, that constant risk, that made the chase so exciting, so fascinating. Oh, how we loved it all: the thunderous pounding and rattling of thousands of hooves; the sharp odor of the sage that they crushed; the accuracy of our shooting; the quick response of our trained horses to our directing hands. Always the run was over all too soon. Never was a horse that could keep up with a frightened buffalo herd for much more than a mile. When I had shot my sixth cow, my horse was all in, winded, and wet with white foaming sweat. I brought him to a stand and sat watching Eli, still going on Jerry, and frequently shooting. Then he, too, stopped, turned, came slowly back; and, equally slow, I rode to meet him. "How many?" I asked.

Grinning, he answered: "Eighteen. Eighteen cows with eighteen shots." Hard to believe, but there were the proofs of it, blackly strewn upon the yellow-grassed plain. To select, chase, and kill eighteen cows in the run of a buffalo herd was something to talk about, to be remembered. I have never heard of anyone's equaling the feat.

103 • [773] The Blackfoot tribes' name for Armell Creek is *Itsiskiotsop Ituktai*, "It-Crushed-Them Creek." For, the story goes, in the long-ago, some women were gouging red-paint earth from the foot of a high cut bank along it, when suddenly the bank fell, burying them deeply beneath it, so deep that their bodies were never recovered. [312] About ten miles up from the mouth of the creek, and some thirty yards west of it, is the *Aistikokukim Mutsiskum*, "Rub-Their-Backs

soon overtake us. We will try to get to that tunnel cabin before they can and stand them off," I answered.

With ready rifles, and lashing our slow sled horses, we left the river and headed for the cabin, jouncing over the hummocky bottom land. A number of riders had left the caravan and were coming swiftly on; with sinking hearts we saw that they would cut us off from the cabin. Hudson, ahead of me, brought his horse to a stand and said, as I drew up beside him: "Well, if we got to die, we're going to die fighting."

"Yes," I answered, and we got down behind our sleds with rifles cocked and ready. On came the Indians, so swiftly and so many; and I, looking at the determination of them, quirting their horses to ever swifter speed, thought how soon our end was to come. So, as I cocked my rifle and made ready to raise it, imagine my surprise, my relief, when the lead rider shouted: "*Ha! Apikuni, unook! Kitsi-kipah anom?*" ("*Ha!* Far-off-White Robe,[2] himself. What do you here?").

He was my good Pikuni friend, Red Bird's Tail. Yes, and there were Little Plume, Running Crane, and many others—all my good friends. We exchanged news. I said that I was going to the cabin to camp for the night. Roared Red Bird's Tail: "No, you will not. You and your companion will stop in my lodge." That we did and had a pleasant evening with him and the other leaders of the tribe. A few of them had been wintering along the foot of the Bear Paw Mountains and on the head of Middle Creek. Buffalo had been hard to get in sufficient numbers for their needs. I urged them to go down-river with us, down where they could be sure to live well. But no, they would not do that. Their enemies the Liars (Crees) were down there, and when they fought them, they would be a war party of men, unemcumbered by their women and children.

I said that Raven Quiver and I positively knew that only between Big River and Elk River (the Missouri and Yellowstone) were now any buffalo. "*Ha.* Not so," old Three Bears exclaimed. "In the

[2] The meaning of *Apikuni* is much debated. Some interpret it as "Spotted Robe" (formerly even Schultz himself did so), some as "Scabby Robe," with reference to the state of the fur at certain seasons of the year.

24: Schultz F-3 (1877-1947) 1980 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

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0773 long-ago that bad god, Red Old Man, herded all of the buffalo up into the mountains and hid them in a great cave, so that all the people of the earth would starve, would die. But that good god, White Old Man, found them; turned them back out onto the plains. So is it that our enemies, the white man, have now hidden the buffalo, so to kill us off, starve us to death. But Sun pities us. Sun is powerful. He will help us to find them."

[776] That soon came to be the belief of all three Blackfoot tribes. For some years after the buffalo were exterminated, the medicine men kept fervently praying Sun to help them find and free the hidden herds.

000 We parted from our friends early in the morning; my last words to them were that, with the coming of the fireboats, Raven Quiver and I would return to our Bear River home, there to remain, for there would be no trading for buffalo robes.

A little way below the mouth of Cow Creek, we saw a lone buffalo calf, almost a yearling, standing in the timber, and I shot it. Its fur was so very dark, beaver-fur-like in texture, that I had Hudson help carefully to remove the hide, nubby horns, hooves, and all. It proved to be the very last buffalo that I killed. Months later good Crow Woman carefully tanned it, and still later I presented it to the Smithsonian Institution.

The fifty blankets that we brought down from the Judith did not last three days; trade was good. We were getting many robes from both the Crees and Red Rivers, and from the latter, also, much dried meat and pemmican. As Kipp well said, not for nothing was this, our last winter of trade.

In August, looking for work, there had come to us from the railend on the Yellowstone, on foot and sore from having sat down in a bed of prickly pears, a young man, a giant of a man, who in my youthful days had been my guide in the Adirondack Mountains of New York. Although not needed, Kipp had made him our helper in trade room and warehouse, and the Indians, because of his great size and vigor, had promptly named him *Manstksi Stumik*, "Young Bull." Well, Young Bull was a great ladies' man, and in due time

25: Ewers E,G-5 (1941-1951) 1963 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

Nevertheless, Weasel Tail, an aged Blood Indian who was one of my best informants in the 1940's, recalled a tradition that his people had at one time made pipe bowls of clay. He understood that wet clay was moulded around an elkhorn to give it the proper shape. After the clay dried the horn was slipped out, leaving a tubular, clay pipe. 323 276 [115]

However, Weasel Tail agreed with other elderly informants that the most common tobacco pipe bowl among the Blackfoot Indians in the earliest times of which they had heard was a tubular one of stone, which they all referred to as a "straight pipe." Both Weasel Tail and Green-Grass-Bull thought that straight pipes were made before the Blackfoot obtained iron tools from the Whites, and that the holes were drilled with flint tools, probably working from both ends toward the center, while the outer surfaces were finished by rubbing with "sand rock." [412]

Robert N. Wilson, who lived among the Blood Indians for more than 60 years as a Mounted Policeman, Indian Agent, and trader, possessed a collection of Blood Indian artifacts which included a straight pipe. Some of the elders of the Blood tribe considered that pipe to be the oldest known specimen of Blood Indian craftsmanship. Pete Bruised Head described this pipe to me as about 6 inches long and of a dark-colored stone. Unfortunately, this relic was stolen from Mr. Wilson's home at Standoff, Alberta, very shortly after his death. Its present location is unknown to me. 276 [177] [115]

Wissler published a native drawing of a straight pipe which was in the sacred beaver bundle owned by Tom Kiyo, a Piegan, in the early years of this century. The drawing depicts a pipe of a slightly bulbous shape, the sides tapering from the center toward each end. Wissler regarded the beaver bundle as the oldest of the several classes of Blackfoot ceremonial bundles, and he considered Tom Kiyo's beaver bundle to be one of the oldest of this class (Wissler, 1912, pp. 170–171, fig. 25). However, the Blackfoot straight pipe also was the ceremonial property of the owners of the black and yellow buffalo tipis. Wissler was told that the "straight-bowled pipe" was given to the beaver bundle owners by the owners of the buffalo-painted lodges (ibid., p. 232). 276 778

It may be significant that in Blackfoot mythology both the beaver bundle and the buffalo-painted lodges were represented as gifts to the Indians from underwater spirits. Short Face, who was reputed to have been the most able reciter of Blackfoot myths among the Indians living on the Blackfeet Reservation in the 1940's, told me the following story of the use of the straight pipe by the first owner of one of the two buffalo-painted lodges: [773] [776] [115]

25: Ewers E,G-5 (1941-1951) 1963 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

Lazy Boy, my eldest Piegan informant (born ca. 1855), was not a pipemaker. But he described the making of pipestems as he had observed it in his youth:

> The Piegan preferred ash wood for pipestems. It is hard and has a pretty grain. We got it from the Crow and Sioux country, but not necessarily in trade. If we couldn't get ash we used willow from this section—silver berry willow or service berry willow. But the grain of these was not as pretty as ash.
>
> Ash of the straightest grain we could get was what we liked best. The wood was put in the sun to dry. Then, when half dry, it was heated over a fire and straightened until it was perfectly straight. The pipemaker then took a hot piece of wire about a yard long. He prayed that the wire would go straight through and not burn out at the side. He made three passes at the end of the stem. On the fourth pass he pushed the hot wire through the length of the stem. If the wire didn't go straight, but came out at the side, it meant bad luck for the pipemaker.
>
> After the hole was made, the pipestem was smoothed on the outside with sandrock. The stem often was wrapped in three places—in the center, and near each end—with brass wire. But stems wound with wire were not used in ceremonies. [11]

COMPARATIVE DATA ON PIPESTEM MAKING

The split, sinew-wrapped pipestem may have been an early Blackfoot type, but it certainly was not peculiar to those Indians. The Plains Cree made them of saskatoon berry shoots. "A suitable rod was split and longitudinal grooves cut down both halves. The two pieces were fitted together and bound with sinew. Aqueous matter from buffalo eyes was applied over the whole stem" (Mandelbaum, 1940, p. 216). Short pipestems were similarly made by the Eskimos of the Eastern Arctic (Manning, 1948, pp. 162–163).

Boring the stem hole in an ash pipestem by the hot wire method was a widespread custom among the Plains tribes. George Catlin seems to have been the first observer to mention it. Writing of the making of catlinite pipes, presumably by the Sioux, in the 1830's, Catlin stated:

> The stems are uniformly made of the stalk of the young ash, which generally grows straight, and has a small pith through the center, which is easily burned out with a hot wire or a piece of hard wood, by a much slower process. [Catlin, 1841, vol. 1, p. 235.]

CONCLUSIONS

The straight pipe is the oldest form of tobacco pipe bowl known to Blackfoot traditions. Its relative antiquity is attested by the facts that the straight pipe is the only form referred to in tribal mythology,

[11] A man's pipe illustrated by Wissler has a stem wrapped with brass wire as described above (Wissler, 1910, p. 83, fig. 48).

25: Ewers E,G-5 (1941-1951) 1963 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
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that it could have been made with stone tools more easily than other known Blackfoot pipe bowl forms, and that it has survived only in the ceremonial contexts of sacred bundles. Probably the straight pipe bowl was smoked most commonly while fitted to a fairly short willow or rosewood stem, which was split longitudinally, the pith removed, and the two pieces glued together and tightly bound with sinew.

The two known examples of Blackfoot straight pipes differ markedly from each other in form. One has a rather bulbous bowl with a constricted neck at the stem end (pl. 20, *b*). The other has slightly curved sides with a collar at the stem end (pl. 20, *a*). Both forms were found among other tribes, the former among the Shoshoni as early as 1805 (as demonstrated by Lewis and Clark data), and the latter among the Crow Indians in the 19th century (as illustrated by specimens from pipe-holder's bundles). Data are insufficient to indicate that the Blackfoot favored either form of straight pipe, or to make possible the positive identification of straight pipes found archeologically as of Blackfoot origin.

The Modified Micmac pipe bowl appears to have been made by Blackfoot pipemakers only within the period that metal tools have been available to them. Its generalized resemblance to the pipe bowls made by Woodland tribes suggests its development from the Micmac pipe. It appears to me not only possible but probable that the Modified Micmac pipe bowl of the Blackfoot Indians originated in the early years of the extension of the fur trade up the Saskatchewan Valley from eastern Canada, and resulted from direct contacts with traders and Eastern Indians who smoked Micmac pipes. Some of the traders who operated in the Blackfoot country in the last quarter of the 18th century may have smoked Micmac pipes. During the last decade of that century Nepissing, Algonquian, and Iroquois Indians, more than 250 in number, followed the fur traders' canoes to the Blackfoot post of Fort Augustus, near present Edmonton, Alberta (Thompson, 1916, p. 312). The Blackfoot Modified Micmac pipe bowl may have been a modification of the Micmac pipes smoked by those Indians.

It seems unlikely that the Blackfoot made pipes of this type more than 40 or 50 years before Prince Maximilian first described and pictured the Blackfoot Modified Micmac pipe bowl in 1833 (fig. 7, *a*). It has remained the principal form of Blackfoot tobacco pipe to the present time.

Blackfoot Modified Micmac pipe bowls generally were made from grayish or greenish stone quarried in river-valley sites found in or near the Blackfoot country. Each pipemaker probably devised and

28: Goldfrank E-4,5 (1939) 1967 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
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"OLD MAN" AND THE FATHER IMAGE IN BLOOD (BLACKFOOT) SOCIETY

By ESTHER S. GOLDFRANK (New York)

Myths have long been considered useful instruments for understanding the material culture and social organization of the society from which they have been obtained and to which they refer. More recently emphasis has been placed on their value in studies of attitude and personality.[1] In both cases certain limitations are immediately apparent. The personality of the narrator as well as the political, economic, educational, religious, and aesthetic aims of the community will determine what is said and what is left unsaid. In speaking of the variations in Blackfoot mythology, Wissler, whose work on this tribe is outstandingly comprehensive, writes:

"This variable condition may be interpreted as a breaking-down of Blackfoot mythology, but there is another factor to be considered. Myths are told by a few individuals, who take pride in their ability and knowledge, and usually impress their own individuality upon the form of the narrative. Thus it seems equally probable that the various versions represent individual contributions, and, in a certain sense, are the ownership-marks of the narrators."[2]

In Hopi emergence myths, the political affinities and status of the storyteller had a notable effect on the form and fancy of his tale[3]—in fact, one informant used thematic material in entirely different ways at different times.[4] Moreover, certain very significant aspects of a culture may be stressed lightly or not at all. Aridity is a basic motive in Pueblo mythology, but irrigation, the agricultural technique without which

[1] Many names come to mind in this connection. To mention a few: Victor Barnouw, Ruth Benedict, George Devereux, A. I. Hallowell, William Morgan, Morris Opler among the anthropologists; Erich Fromm, Abram Kardiner, Harry B. Lee, Warner Muensterberger, Géza Róheim among the psychoanalysts.

[2] Clark Wissler, and D. C. Duvall, "Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians," *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History*, II: 5, 1908.

[3] Esther S. Goldfrank, "The Impact of Situation and Personality on Four Hopi Emergence Myths," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, IV, 1948, *passim*.

[4] *Op. cit.*, pp. 245 ff.; also *idem*, "Isleta Variants: A Study in Flexibility," *J. Am. Folklore*, XXXIX, 1926, *passim*.

28: Goldfrank E-4,5 (1939) 1967 NF6 Blackfoot NF6 Blood

few crops would prosper in that water-deficient region, is mentioned rarely and then briefly.[5]

Time raises equally important problems. Ancient customs may be remembered in myth long after they have vanished from the scene entirely or are operative only on special and usually ceremonial occasions. The buffalo hunt still has a central role in Blackfoot mythology, although the buffalo disappeared by 1880. The emphasis on the bow and arrow is similarly out of focus. On the other hand, new elements may be introduced (the horse in Navaho legend); or again, and this is more frequent, they may not. Blackfoot tales tell nothing of the wheat farming which became a substantial feature of Blackfoot economy in the early 1900's or of the frame houses that replaced the skin "lodges" years before.

Such irregularities should not discourage us from utilizing mythological texts, but they should warn against a simplistic interpretation of social life and personality structure in a given community over a long period of time. Necessarily, any feature indicated in a myth, whether a material object, institution, attitude, or relationship has reality. But it may be entirely incorrect to conclude from this that these different features carry the same weight in the actual situation as they do in the myth. The stories of Old Man, an important source of information for any study of Blood attitudes toward the father or father substitute, while extremely suggestive, would not provide a safe basis for predicting which attitude was given the greatest emphasis today—at least not on the overt level. Only a knowledge of Blood society as a whole and over time enables us to evaluate the single features properly.

The Blackfoot stories about Old Man (*napiw*[6]) are of two kinds. One cycle reveals him as creator and giver, a beneficent being who makes the earth and all that lives on it, provides a language for the people, teaches the skills of hunting and warfare and the ways of marriage.[6] The second is very different both in substance and conception. It discloses Old Man as a malevolent being, a trickster who stops at nothing. He does not hesitate to retrieve a robe given earlier as a gift.[7] He steals leggings from a stranger who offers him a night's lodging. He gouges out coyote's eyes. He roasts squirrels to death in hot ashes. He thrusts his oversized penis (lariot) through the ground until it "raises" and kills a

[5] Karl A. Wittfogel and Esther S. Goldfrank, "Some Aspects of Pueblo Mythology and Society," *J. of Am. Folklore*, LVI: 23, 1943.

[6] John Maclean, *Canadian Savage Folk*, Toronto, 1896, pp. 51 ff.; see also *idem*, "Blackfoot Mythology," *J. Am. Folklore*, VI: 165, 1893.

[7] Except where otherwise indicated, the themes cited appear in Clark Wissler and D. C. Duvall, *op. cit.*

28: Goldfrank E-4,5 (1939) 1967 NF6 Blackfoot NF6 Blood

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girl picking strawberries. He decapitates babies left alone momentarily, placing their heads in their cradles and their bodies in a pot to boil.

Repulsive as these crimes are, Old Man frequently "gets away with it." But frequently too he is fooled and punished. He may be beaten in a race by coyote, who, simulating lameness at the start, later outruns him and makes off with his meat. He may lose the medicine leggings he has stolen. He may be double-crossed by women feigning death. He may be defecated on because he split open the mouths of young nighthawks. He may lose his eyes because he failed to heed a warning. He may be rejected in marriage and become a pine tree.

Such vulnerability makes it clear that Old Man is no "perfect" godhead—today even in the creation myths he is forced to give in to Old Woman, who, though expected to have only "second say," seems, in many important instances, to make the final decisions.[8] On the other hand, the harm Old Man endures is, in most cases, considerably lighter than the suffering he inflicts. Mclean, writing in 1896, held that Old Man was not the "Great Spirit," but a secondary creator.[9] Whether or not he was the primary, and as such, a "perfect" divinity in the original Blackfoot creation myth—and Wissler believes "that the Blackfoot formerly had a well-defined creation myth, in which the Old Man took the initiative in producing and transforming the world"[10]—his identification, now and for decades,[11] with the shabby and amoral trickster certainly puts him closer to man than to God. And the Blood leave no doubt as to the completeness of this identification: in the same tale, Old Man appears both as trickster and creator.[12]

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A comparison of Blackfoot myths—the earliest to be mentioned ap-

000

[8] *Op. cit.*, pp. 19 ff. Old Woman, contrary to Old Man's decision, insists that tanning the hides (woman's work) must be made very difficult "so that the good workers may be found out." Again, contrary to Old Man, she insists that, while people will have eyes and mouths in their faces, these "shall all be set crosswise" and "not straight up and down." Similarly, she insists that "there shall be four fingers and one thumb on each hand," and not, as Old Man suggested, "ten fingers on each hand." And when Old Man says, "The genitals shall be at our navels," Old Woman answers, "No, that will make childbearing too easy; the people will not care for their children. The genitals shall be at the pubes." And it is Old Woman who decides by the throw of her rock that "it is better for people to die forever; for if they did not die forever, they would never feel sorry for each other, and there would be no sympathy in the world." But Old Man does get the last word: When Old Woman's daughter dies, she regrets her earlier decision. "Let us have our say over again," she pleads. But this time Old Man is adamant. "No," he answers, "we fixed it once."

[9] John Maclean, *Canadian Savage Folk*, p. 52; see also Clark Wissler and D. C. Duvall, "Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians," pp. 23 ff.

[10] *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

[11] *Loc. cit.*

[12] John Maclean, "Blackfoot Mythology," p. 166.

28: Goldfrank E-4,5 (1939) 1967 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Blood

A comparison of Blackfoot myths--the earliest to be mentioned appears in Henry and Thompson's journal[13]—indicates a gradual deterioration in the creation myth,[14] a merging of its culture hero (perhaps originally the "Great Spirit" or the Sun)[15] with the far from admirable "trickster," whose pranks, rather than the wisdom and generosity of the Creator, receive the attention of the Blackfoot narrator today.

It seems legitimate to see in this "secondary creator"—one who is less than perfectly divine and more than ordinarily human—a projection of the Blackfoot father image. Manifestly, the Old Man stories underline conflicting attitudes that reveal a fundamental ambivalence toward the father.[16] But neither the fact that the obscene and antisocial variants are recited almost exclusively,[17] nor that "Old Man" is a synonym for immorality,[18] nor that the thought of praying to him provokes merriment,[19] would indicate whether the more frequent emphasis of the tales directly or invertedly reflects expressed opinion. For an answer we must examine, as suggested above, certain aspects and aims of Blackfoot, or more specifically Blood society, both now and in the past.[20]

In 1877, the Blood were confined to a Reservation in Alberta, Canada. In 1878, a Blood winter count reads, "This was the year the

[13] Alexander Henry and David Thompson, *New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest, The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and David Thompson*, edited by Elliott Coues, New York, 1897, p. 528.

[14] Clark Wissler and D. C. Duvall, "Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians," p. 9.

[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 10 ff. Here Wissler suggests that a possible confusion between the Sun (*natos*) and Old Man (*napiw*) has resulted in the identification of the heroes of the two tale cycles. He notes "that the earlier writers are disposed to treat *Natos*, the Sun, as the home of the Old Man, while the later ones make each a character." Whatever the phonetic similarities in these two names, it is difficult to see this as a plausible reason for the identification of the trickster and creator. For a discussion of some of the general points involved, see David Bidney, "The Concept of Myth and the Problem of Psychocultural Evolution," *Am. Anthropologist*, LII, 1950.

[16] The Freudian school of psychoanalysis stresses that such ambivalence is generated by the oedipal situation. See particularly Géza Róheim, *Psychoanalysis and Anthropology*, New York: Int. Univ. Press, 1950.

[17] Clark Wissler and D. C. Duvall, "Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians," p. 9.

[18] *Loc. cit.*

[19] *Loc. cit.*

[20] It has not seemed necessary to document the numerous statements on institutions and history made in the following pages. For general background material, see Esther S. Goldfrank, "Changing Configurations in the Social Organization of a Blackfoot Tribe during the Reserve Period," *Monographs of the American Ethnological Society*, VIII, New York, 1945; L. M. Hanks, Jr. and Jane Richardson, "Observations on Northern Blackfoot Kinship," *Monographs of the American Ethnological Society*, IX, New York, 1945; Oscar Lewis, "The Effect of White Contact upon Blackfoot Culture," *Monographs of the American Ethnological Society*, VI, New York, 1942; Clark Wissler, "The Social Life of the Blackfoot Indians," *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History*, VII, New York, 1911. The data on favoritism are taken essentially from notes made by me in 1939 on the Blood Reservation.

28: Goldfrank E-4,5 (1939) 1967 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Blood

families these relationships were taken very seriously. In all, no matter how limited the material benefits, they gave an added security to children whose sense of belonging was often shaken.

But such extensions did not alter the traditional basis of favoritism. It was the father who, almost always established a *minipoka*, and it was the father who remained the symbol of the "giver." To say, "He was like a father to me," not only implied that the individual referred to had something to offer, but that the speaker had benefited from his generosity and love. That a "true" *minipoka* might see his father as "giver" is quite understandable. But others who had enjoyed little, if any, of the favorite's privileges built a similar image. Unpleasant treatment at the hands of a father or father substitute (frequently an older brother-in-law) was recalled with little display of hostility or repressed altogether.

A man whose father had "walked out on the family" would tell with obvious pleasure of the latter's kindness to him during a short visit years afterwards; or, a man who was "raised" by his grandmother and shunted about from place to place, would say of the various heads of the households he had stayed in, "They all treated me like a son," although none of them, not even those who had "special power," conspicuously demonstrated their affection for him; or a man who had donned women's clothes and attempted suicide because his *minipoka* brother-in-law was the accepted family head, would speak most enthusiastically of the latter's "goodness" to him.

Thus it is clear that as more wealth accumulated—and this holds for the nonnative as well as for the native forms—a son's status, privilege and prestige was tied more and more to his father's; and more and more, a son felt impelled to insist that his father was outstandingly good and generous. For the *minipoka* the gap between fact and profession may not have been too great. For those who wanted to keep up with the Joneses—the less privileged and the little-privileged, and these were the overwhelming majority—it must have been wide indeed. Under these circumstances, the trickster tales undoubtedly fulfilled an important function: in a society where the institutions encouraged an idealization of the father, they offered a vigorous and uncensored release for the son's repressed feelings of aggression.

So interpreted, the differently weighted father images evoked in Blood mythology and in daily living generally become understandable. Equally understandable is the increased popularity of the trickster tales.

31: Schaeffer E,G-4,5 (1950) 1978
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One final entry on the event was recorded the following day: 224 175

> Some Blackfeet arrived from the camp where I had been, bringing a quantity of fat meat. They informed me we had scarcely left when a large herd was brought in; they had called to us, but we did not hear, as we were too busy racing.

The Drive Complex: Ritual

For purposes of discussion, the drive complex can be divided into two phases: (1) the drive ritual, and (2) the drive procedures proper. I would at this time like to pass hurriedly over the ritualistic aspect, as it is less immediate to our interest than the mechanical details of the drive. 224 [128]

The drive ritual apparently centered about the *iniskim* or so-called "buffalo stone." The *iniskim* is a fossil type of marine shell that bears a fancied resemblance to a buffalo. They can be found in various parts of the Reservation, at places like Buffalo Lake. The apparent resemblance to an animal probably led the Blackfeet to employ these ammonite septa as charms that possessed magical powers to lure the buffalo. 224 778

There is an origin legend that accounts for the presence of the buffalo stone among the Blackfeet. Clark Wissler, James Willard Schultz, and others recorded different versions of this myth. In the story, the stone revealed itself to a woman and gave her a number of songs by means of which she was able to influence the herd so that her people were successful in the drive. According to Blackfeet ritual pattern, a man and a woman, usually a husband and wife, teamed together to carry out certain observances. Often, they were assisted by friends. A series of songs and possibly imitative dances were performed as part of the drive rites. 773 224 778 224 [533]

These songs took up most of the night. Early in the morning, the runner was sent out from the lodge where the ceremony was held to the gathering area. In part, the ritual was intended to ensure the safety and success of the runner out on the range, and the success of the drive was now largely dependent upon his skill and good fortune. 224

The Drive Complex: Procedures

The native Blackfeet term for the runner refers to "drawing in" or "driving in,"

[p.245-A]

37: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1944) 1972 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

not only equivalent to the native sweat lodge, but "that when they had received baptism they can conquer any enemy whatsoever." Furthermore, they believed he could "cause the thunder to roll" when he was not satisfied. Apparently it was this last power, which they attributed to him, that won Father Point his Blackfoot name of "Thunder Chief."[2]

All of the other pictures on this plate refer to aspects of the Indians' traditional religious beliefs – beliefs they had held long before Father Point appeared among them.

The picture at the lower right contrasts most sharply with the Indians' recognition of Father Point as the new Thunder Chief. It depicts the traditional thunder ceremony of the Blackfoot – the medicine-pipe ceremony, performed each spring after the first thunder was heard. As early as 1809 the British fur trader, Alexander Henry, had observed, "Thunder is a man who was very wicked and troublesome to the Indians, killing men and beasts in great numbers. But many years ago he made peace with the Blackfeet, and gave them a pipestem in token of his friendship, since which period he has become harmless" (Henry 1897: II: 366). A well-known tribal myth, recorded by Clark Wissler and David Duvall (1908: 89-90) more than a half-century ago, tells of Thunder's gift of the medicine-pipe to the Blackfoot, along with instructions for the performance of the ceremony in his honor.

The two thunderbirds pictured at the top of this scene were believed to cause thunder and lightning by the flapping of their huge wings. The perspective in the lower portion of this scene is deceptive. Actually the medicine-pipe man is intended to be sitting in front of rather than on top of the dry-painting altar which was specially made for use during the ceremony. He wears the distinctive, club-like headdress of a Blackfoot medicine-pipe man. The German scientist, Maximilian, Prince of Wied-Neuwied, while he was among the Blackfoot at Fort Mc Kenzie during the late summer of 1833 observed that the medicine men "divide [their hair] into several thick queues all around, and generally bind them altogether with a leather strap, in a thick knot over the forehead" (Thwaites 1904-1907: XXI: 99-100).

The altar for the Blackfoot medicine-pipe ceremony was of dry color upon the ground in front of the pipe-owner, the leader in the ritual. One half was red (at left in the picture), and the other half black (at right). Four feather plumes – two red and two black – were placed upright at the corners of the altar. These characteristics of the altar for the medicine-pipe ceremony are correctly depicted in the artist's scene.

The medicine-pipe ceremony and that of the horse medicine cult among the Blackfoot were closely associated. On the night of March 29, 1943, I witnessed a horse medicine ceremony conducted by Wallace Night Gun, then leader of that cult on the Blackfeet Reservation. The altar prepared, used, and destroyed before the conclusion of that lengthy ceremony was like the one pictured by the unknown Indian artist in his representation of the medicine-pipe ceremony nearly a century earlier (Ewers 1955: 265-66, fig. 33). Wissler has described in

37: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1944) 1972 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

detail the complex and prolonged ritual of the Blackfoot medicine-pipe ceremony, based upon his field investigations of more than sixty years ago (Wissler 1912: 136-165).

At the top center of this plate is pictured an elaborately painted shield. Shields were the major defensive weapons of the Blackfoot. They were commonly carried in large-scale battles, but were not carried by members of small horse raiding parties against the enemy. They were sacred objects. Warriors placed greater faith in the protective powers of the paintings on their front surfaces than in the thickness of the buffalo rawhide from which they were made. These designs originally were given to Indians in dreams or visions by supernatural powers who took pity upon them. But the shields could be transferred later from one Indian to another.

Interestingly enough the shield depicted by that unnamed Blackfoot Indian artist in 1847 bears so close a resemblance to a shield preserved in the collections of the American Museum of Natural History in New York (Cat. No. 50-5760) that it seems probable the artist attempted to picture that same shield. The central figure of the standing buffalo is more realistically rendered on the specimen than in the drawing. But the flanking arcs – painted black with white dots – are very similar. Perhaps the early artist's rendering of this shield is not precisely accurate in every detail, or this specimen may be a remade or repainted version of the shield the artist pictured. Wissler stated that the museum specimen was obtained from a North Blackfoot "who had failed to learn the ritual after its transfer to him." Wissler also reported that the Blackfoot believed this was one of the three medicine shields referred to in their myth accounting for the origin of shields. According to that myth, an Indian named Always Talking killed his wife for infidelity. The buffalo revived her, and before sending her back to her remorseful husband, gave her her choice of any three shields owned by the buffalo. Wissler first pictured this shield in 1912 (Wissler 1912: 122, fig. 16; Wissler and Duvall 1908: 99-102). Since then it has been illustrated in numerous popular publications on the Plains Indians (see especially Lowie 1954: fig. 62).

The drawing at the upper right may be the earliest known colored illustration of an identified Blackfoot painted tipi. In 1809 Alexander Henry observed that the Blackfoot painted both birds and beasts "in a rude uncouth manner" on the covers of their tipis. He apparently did not recognize the religious significance of those paintings (Henry 1897: II: 527).

The unnamed Blackfoot artist portrayed to the best of his ability the snake-painted tipi. Undoubtedly, he pictured what he knew about this tipi rather than what he saw when viewing it from the south side. For there was but one snake painted on each side of the cover. He lets us know that there was a pair of snakes on this tipi by showing both on the same side, one above the other.

The snake-painted tipi was regarded by my Blackfoot informants as one of the oldest of the tipis of the tribe, because it was said to have been taken from the snakes by the mythological tribal hero, Blood Clot. Wissler and Duvall (1908: 53-58) recorded the Blood Clot myth. Wissler also learned that there

37: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1944) 1972 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

532 342 were snake-painted tipis among three of the four major divisions of the Blackfoot – the South Piegan (in Montana), and the North Piegan and Blood (in Canada), while the North Blackfoot had a Big Snake (rattlesnake) tipi. He also described one of these tipis (Wissler 1912: 220-22, 337-38).

[123] Ninety-five years after the unnamed Blackfoot artist pictured a snake-painted tipi, I saw one of them, then owned by Yellow Kidney and his wife, in the sun dance encampment near Browning. The snakes' heads were painted red, and their bodies were alternating blocks of red and green, zig-zagging around the tipi cover against a white background – much as they are pictured by the Blackfoot artist in 1847. The bottom portion of the tipi cover was also painted red with white discs, and three horizontal red bands were painted at the top of the white background of the central portion – as in the earlier artist's rendering. The upper portion (representing the night sky) was painted black, although the small discs within that area (representing stars) were green on the Yellow Kidney tipi, [178] whereas they are white in the artist's version of the snake-painted tipi. It is significant that the design of this painted tipi changed very little over a period of a century, during which it must have been repainted many times on new lodge covers of buffalo cow skin and more recently of white cloth, or canvas.

532 776 The crescent-shaped moon (in black) and circular sun (orange) appearing in the left center of the artist's work must be intended to show that Sun and Moon were major supernaturals recognized by the Blackfoot. In the tribal mythology 821 Moon is considered to be Sun's wife, and Morning Star was their son. This [773] relationship is repeatedly referred to in such well-known Blackfoot myths as [796] Scar Face, and The Fixed Star (or The Woman Who Married a Star) – myths [178] which account for the origin of the sun dance, and the symbolism of the sacred digging stick carried by the medicine woman in that most important tribal religious ceremony (Wissler and Duvall 1908: 58-68). On some of the dry-painting altars employed in Blackfoot ceremonies the moon is represented in black paint as in the artist's drawing. But on the sun dance altar it is yellow, with a narrow black center. It is always portrayed as a crescent (Wissler 1912: 254-57).

532 825 This leaves only the small panel at the bottom left of the plate to be interpreted. Perhaps the artist chose to picture the pair of antelopes as a further indication of the variety of sources of supernatural power known to the [776] Blackfoot. The antelope might, of course, have been the artist's own supernatural helper. The Blackfoot knew the antelope as the swiftest of the larger mammals on the plains. Antelope power provided a war medicine. [526] Contenders in the foot races between members of the different men's societies [575] during the summer sun dance encampments also wanted antelope power to enhance their swiftness afoot.

178 [123] [797] [144] I was privileged to live among the Blackfoot Indians in Montana for three and one-half years (1941-1944) nearly a century after Father Point first brought the teachings of Christianity to those Indians. Blackfoot life and culture had changed markedly during the intervening years. By the early 1940s less than 20%

37: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1944) 1972 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

of these Indians were full-bloods. A goodly number had more than one white grandparent. These Indians, with few exceptions, had become Christians – the great majority of them Roman Catholics. Even the oldest of the full-bloods who died during those years received Christian funerals at which a priest or minister officiated in the services in the church and at the cemetery. I served as a pallbearer in several of those services. Yet I noticed that after the white clergyman formally entrusted the body to the earth, it was customary for an aged Indian to step forward and deliver a fervent prayer in his own language, before the assembled mourners dispersed.

During those years no young men fasted and sought visions in isolated localities. There were no painted shields among these Indians, who had not gone to war against enemy tribes for more than a half century. Yet more than a score of veterans of the intertribal wars, their wives, or widows, were still living. They formed the nucleus of that portion of the tribe who gathered each summer to participate in the sun dance. There were nearly a score of painted lodges in the sun dance encampment behind the museum near Browning in 1942. Owners of medicine-pipe bundles still opened them in a ritual manner after the first thunder in spring; and the sacred horse medicine cult was still active. Older full-bloods still recited in fascinating detail the beautiful myths which told of the origins of the medicine bundles and religious rituals of the Blackfoot. Nearly a century after Father Point's pioneer Christian missionary endeavors among these Indians, traditional Blackfoot religion, such as was interpreted by that unnamed artist in 1847, was still very much alive.

NOTES

1. I am indebted to Holt, Rinehart and Winston of New York and to Loyola University Press, Chicago, for permission to reprint this plate.
2. This letter, as quoted by Father De Smet, is not dated, Presumably it was written in 1847 (Smet 1905: III: 953-54).

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41: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1944) 1945
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24. Yellow buffalo painted lodge in 1942.

of the total number of lodges in a camp were painted, and some of the painted ones employed symbols of power other than animal figures. However, from the point of view of aesthetic interest, the lodges painted with animal figures are outstanding. Their great size, and their simple, primitive, decorative quality command attention and admiration. It is in the painted animal figures on lodge covers that we find the finest expression of Blackfeet religious art. Certainly they represent the highest achievement of traditional Blackfeet painting. 531 121

QUILLWORK

The Blackfeet Indians have a beautiful legend explaining how the first porcupines were given to one of their ancestors by the powerful Thunder spirit. The same legend states that Thunder taught this person how to do quillwork. This is said to have happened a very long time ago. Certainly porcupine quillwork is one of the Blackfeet decorative arts that originated before these Indians 237 [773] 776 [825] 531

[P. 27-B]

42: Kehoe A,G-4,5 (1953, 1956) 1960
NF6 Blackfoot NF6

the centre of the lodge the fire was made, and to keep the fire from spreading and to adapt it for cooking purposes, a small circle of stones was placed which confined the fire. When the camp was moved the circles of stones were left, and that which we saw was one of the circles. . . .

In the brush fringing the rivers of the west stone circles, deeply imbedded in the soil, are found, linking the past with the present.

An eyewitness account of the use of stones by the Blackfoot to hold down lodge margins was given by John R. Barrow, a Wisconsin youth in Montana in 1880–82. The camp was that of Running Rabbit and his followers (Phillips, 1927, p. 9):[4]

The typical tepee was a conical lodge of specially tanned elkskin stretched over a framework of perhaps twenty-five skin peeled lodge-pole pine. The bottom of the tepee was held down by stones.

Schultz, who lived in Montana during the last decades of the 19th century, speaks of stone circles marking the encampments of winter hunters (Schultz, 1907, p. 63):

You have perhaps noticed on the northwestern plains, circles of stones or small boulders, varying in size from twelve to twenty and more feet in diameter. They were used to weight the lower edge of lodge skins, to prevent the structure being blown over by a hard wind, and when camp was moved they were simply rolled off the leather. Many of these circles are found miles and miles from any water, and you may have wondered how the people there encamped managed to assuage their thirst; they melted snow; their horses ate snow with the grass; buffalo chips were used for fuel. The stone circles mark the place of an encampment of winter hunters in the long ago. Some of them are so ancient that the tops of the stones are barely visible above the turf, having gradually sunk into the ground of their own weight during successive wet seasons.[5]

George Bird Grinnell talked to the older men of the Blackfoot tribes in the years immediately preceding 1890. He collected the following data on circles of stones (Grinnell, 1892, p. 198):

In ancient times, before they had knives of metal, stones were used to hold down the edges of the lodge, to keep it from being blown away. These varied in size from six inches to a foot or more in diameter. Everywhere on the prairie, one may now see circles of these stones, and, within these the smaller ones, which surrounded the fireplace. Some of them have lain so long that only the tops now project above the turf, and undoubtedly many of them are now buried out of sight.

The age of the use of stones as lodge-cover weights is indicated by the fact that it has become an intimate part of Blackfoot astronomy. Brings-Down-the-Sun, an old Blood ceremonialist, in relating the "Star Husband" tale to McClintock (1910, p. 500) pointed out that the constellation known as the Spider Lodge was thus named because of the arrangement of its stars, suggesting a tipi ring:

The half circle of stars to the east (Northern Crown) is the lodge of the Spider Man, and the five bright stars just beyond (in the constellation of Hercules) are

[4] Claude E. Schaeffer, Portland, Oreg., kindly brought this reference to my attention.

[5] In a letter dated March 25, 1954, John C. Ewers commented on this passage, "The use of stones to hold down tipis in winter could be a survival in historic times from a common (perhaps year-round) custom in the protohistoric. Undoubtably it would be quite a task to drive pegs into frozen ground in the winter season."

42: Kehoe A,G-4,5 (1953, 1956) 1960
NF6 Blackfoot NF6

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his five fingers, with which he spun the web, upon which So-at-sa-ki was let down from the sky. Whenever you see half-buried and overgrown circles, or clusters of stones on the plains, marking the sites of Blackfeet camps in the ancient days, when they used stones to hold down the sides of their lodges, you will know why the half-circle of the stars was called by our fathers, "The lodge of the Spider Man."

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In another place (McClintock, 1910, p. 492) Brings-Down-the-Sun, in discussing the origin of the Sun Dance, pointed out:

> We know not when the Sun-dance had its origin. It was long ago, when the Blackfeet used dogs for beasts of burden instead of horses; when they stretched the legs and bodies of their dogs on sticks to make them large, and when they used stones instead of wooden pegs to hold down their lodges.

During the years immediately preceding 1909, Clark Wissler recorded information on the material culture of the Blackfoot Indians. He notes (Wissler, 1910, p. 108):

> During the winter, or even at any time, the cover of the tipi was often held down by stones laid on its edges. Circles of such stones are to be seen in many parts of the Blackfoot country, marking the sites of former camps or burial tipis.

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Wissler (1913, p. 430) takes the following from Duvall's notes on the construction of the Ma'toki dance structure made from lodge covers, with rocks to weight down the bottoms:

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> The ma'toki dance but once a year when the camp circle is formed. Their ceremony lasts four days. First they make a shelter somewhat like the one used for the sun dance. A tipi pole is set up in the center, with a peculiar cross piece near the top. A number of travois are set in a circle around this pole and joined together by tipi poles tied along the top, making a single railing all the way around. Then other tipi poles are tied to this and to the cross piece on the center pole, forming rafters like in the sun dance shelter. On the sides and over the top are stretched tipi covers. At the bottom they are weighted with stones. Along the sides within blankets are suspended.

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It has been noted that another neighbor of the Blackfoot, the Crow Indians to the south, used rocks to weigh down their lodge covers. During visits to the Crow Reservation during the period 1907–16, Lowie (1922, p. 224) obtained the following information concerning the practice:

> Bear-Crane stated that long ago rocks instead of pegs were used to weigh down the bottom of tipi covers; another informant restricts the practice to the winter season.

There are, perhaps, other documentary references to the topic that have escaped my attention, but those cited are numerous enough, it is believed, to indicate that the Blackfoot, Cree, Crow, Dakota, and probably other tribes in the northwestern Plains employed stones or occasionally sod as lodge-cover bottom weights. Our references cover the period from 1833 down to contemporary times, when stones are rarely seen, and the wooden tent peg appears to be ubiquitous.

There are countless Napi stories still in circulation. These vary greatly among themselves from the didactic to the "pornographic." Generally, they deal with the nitty-gritty side of life, not the lyric nor the romantic. Thus they reflect the many-faceted nature of Napi himself. He is the old Algonquin god, and appears as creator, trickster, thief, scoundrel, libertine, wise man, judge, nit-wit and the brunt of jokes. He is a culture hero and messianic figure of the Algonquin peoples. His Blackfeet name *Napi* means both "old" and "white," and usually with the suffix -koan (person) the word is applied to the white man. Thus he reminds of the Mexican Quetzalcoatl and may have the same origin. Such a figure crops up in myths from all over the Americas. Curiously enough, modern Blackfeet frequently call him redundantly "Old Napi" as if they had forgotten the true meaning of his Algonquin name. This particular Napi story, however, also introduces the Coyote, who is not always portrayed as companion of Old Man, but who fills much the same role of creator, trickster, culture hero in the mythology of California, the Southwest, the Northwest Plateau. This element may therefore be a non-Algonquin accretion to the tale. But it lends the story a tone of pure poetry, making Old Man into a typical witch or shaman figure accompanied by his animal "alter ego." 538 538 773 [171]

"The Ghost Wife" is of course a Blackfeet version of a legend that is found around the world. To the ancient Greeks, this was the story of Orpheus and Euridyce. Yet the Blackfeet version is peculiarly low-key. Its matter-of-fact tone deprives it of some of the warmth and color we might hope for and which we may find in the Chippewa version. Perhaps the Blackfeet story has been too long neglected. When Sam New Breast told it to me, he delivered it as a dialogue in the manner of a play with two characters: Ninau (the man or chief) and Sikapiohkitupi (the Pale Rider). I have not attempted to imitate this style in my rendering, but I think it is significant that such a modern technique should also be so traditional. 538 171 538

"The Half-Man" is quite a different type of story, evidently the record of an actual event. It's a perfect little horror, but it has a kind of simple majesty and its element of cause and effect satisfies the conventional European thinking much more, say, than that of "The Woman of Stone."

"Scarface" is an ancient Blackfeet classic and is so regarded by the people, who treat it with much more respect than some of their other tales, a Napi story, for example. It has often been told in books and even in opera. Yet it has so many versions that I do not feel ashamed to tell it again, in a version that is different. Here, instead of the common romantic happy ending, we have an ironic twist that 538 128

course I would not consider even opening the door to the Chief's room—his medicine bundles are in there, and entry is strictly *verboten*. This does not imply any lack of acceptance of me by the Chief; the Chief has never actually forbidden me to enter his room, but if I were to go in there I might inadvertently perform some gesture improper to the sanctity of his medicine, and so we have an unspoken understanding that I will not so dishonor my Indian dad. I would really like to examine the Chief's room, though, and of course he would never know that I had been in there. But I would know.

I was awakened finally at 4:30 A.M. by what I thought was the whining of a dog but which turned out to be the creaking of the outhouse door, blown back and forth by the wind. Strangely enough, two dogs really did appear, about an hour later. Both of them are very thin, and apparently they belong here because they have accumulated in the back yard a collection of deer bones, horses' hooves, and other chewables. Indians generally are not unkind to animals. A Blackfoot legend tells of a young man who was so cruel as to partially skin a female prairie dog alive, and who was haunted by a vision of the poor tormented creature until he became insane. But Indians do not believe in interfering with nature any more than is necessary, and they feel that a horse or a dog that cannot take care of itself is not worth having. The Blackfoots, by the way, never ate dogs, whom they regarded as guardians of the camp, and the Blackfoots looked down their regal noses at those several tribes—Sioux, Assiniboine, Cree, etc.—that habitually consumed dog flesh.

One of the dogs that showed up this morning, a female, looks exactly like a coyote, and she spends most of her time hunting field mice. The other dog apparently is Coyote's pup for he keeps trying to nurse on her although the lazy bum is at least four months old. In lieu of hunting mice for a living, he has chosen the profession of archaeology and has pock-marked the yard with small, inutile excavations. I named him Rascal, because that's what he is.

The old woodstove in the ranch house kitchen now has a small butane burner on top of it, and on this I fried eggs and warmed some tinned beef. The rest of the house appears pretty much as I remember it, but in the living-room I noted two additions: on the table by the Chief's chair is a model of an F-86 jet fighter plane, poised in an attitude of strafing the tabletop, and on the wall is a framed portrait of Jesus with an accompanying pronouncement signed by a Roman Catholic priest that the family of J. White Calf has been consecrated to the Sacred Heart.

54: Lancaster F-3(1958-1966)1966 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Piegan
Montana

and Blackfoot religious ceremonies back to back, and if a Blackfoot religious article slips into the grave at a good Catholic funeral, and if the grave is decorated not with flowers but with yard goods, blankets, tobacco or children's toys, the good Father does not see these things. His concern is with lives and with souls, not with gestures, and perhaps this is one of the reasons that all the Blackfoots, of whatever religious belief, hold him in such high regard.

Volumes could be written about Father Mallman, but I think that a single anecdote of recent occurrence will suffice. It is no secret that when an elderly "long-hair," a member of the Father's congregation, was laid to rest with Catholic rites a few years ago, a horse was killed in the man's honor (an ancient Indian gesture of respect for the deceased). And when some sanctimonious grimalkin came tattling to Father Mallman about the horse, the Father's only comment was that he hoped it had been a very good horse because the deceased had been a very good Catholic.

I think that the basically syncretistical attitude of the Blackfoot toward Christianity--an attitude which *must* be understood if one is to achieve any real understanding of the Indian himself--is well expressed in a story which the Chief told me four years ago, after he had adopted me as his son. This was the traditional Blackfoot story of the Creation, and although it became apparent as the story unfolded that much of the traditional Christian belief had by now become incorporated into the Blackfoot tradition, it became apparent too that here was not only a classic of American Indian legendry but a classic statement of philosophical and religious tolerance from which our overly sophisticated modern world might well derive a meaningful lesson.

The occasion of the Chief's telling this story also hosted my first attempt to transcribe Blackfoot into English, and a rereading of this virginal effort never fails to paint my downy cheek with the rubescence of embarrassment. There was nothing wrong with my translation--that was fine--but when it came to preparing the story for publication I apparently felt compelled to imitate the asininities of certain of my predecessors in the field of Indian study because I loaded the phrasing with such conventional Indian corn as, "Hear me!" and "I have spoken!" Granted that a word-for-word translation of Blackfoot into English would not be possible, and granted also that these lofty phrases represent a perfectly valid interpretation of the meanings implicit in the Blackfoot phrases from which they were taken, the fact remains that the very same Blackfoot phrases could with equal validity have been rendered as, "Get this straight, Bus-

54 Lancaster F-3(1958-1966)1966 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
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ter!" and, "You heard what I said, so don't give me any jazz about it!" I hate a phony. Especially when he is me. 126

My first writings about the American Indian admittedly were lacking in maturity, but there is considerable satisfaction for me in knowing that I at least managed to avoid the crudity so often perpetrated by anthropologists, ethnologists and just plain pain-in-the-ologists: at least I did not refer to the Indians as "bucks" and "squaws." Webster defines the word "squaw" as follows: "An American Indian woman; among Indians, any woman; a female." This is pure manure! I am familiar with a word of Eastern Algonkin origin which is vaguely similar to "squaw," but the word "squaw" in itself is a White Man's word and it does *not* mean "woman" in any Plains Indian language. Furthermore, I have never heard any American Indian employ the word "squaw" in respectful reference to any female. Further-furthermore, Indians enjoy being referred to as "bucks" and "squaws" just about as much as non-Indians would enjoy being referred to as "studs" and "bitches." My Indian brother, Jim, feels so strongly on this point that he invariably translates the Blackfoot word for "man" as "gentleman" and the Blackfoot word for "woman" as "lady." It does sound rather odd to hear Jim say something like, "Then the Blackfoot gentleman scalped the Crow gentleman and gave the scalp to a Blackfoot lady," but I don't blame Jim a darn bit—as a matter of fact, Jim's attitude toward this subject has served only to increase my already monumental respect for him.

Despite the quantity of corn transplanted therein by guess-who, the Blackfoot story of the Creation is a fascinating tale. Blackfoot stories have no titles as such, but for reasons of publication, and because of the contemporary incident—the early attempts to orbit a satellite—which induced the Chief to relate this tale, I titled it, "Why the White Man Will Never Reach the Sun." 773

I am Running Wolf, the same who is Chief White Calf, Chief of the Piegan Blackfeet, given to be chief in the year 1897 by my father, Last Gun, who was Chief White Calf of the Blackfoot Nation before me, and who gave me to be chief because he was getting pretty old. I tell you who I am so you will know that what is spoken here is spoken by me, and you know that I am Chief White Calf of the Piegans and I speak with one tongue. What I say here is the truth, and if anybody says to you that it is not the truth then you ask them how they know, for they were not there at the beginning. 539

Hear me, I am Chief White Calf of the Blackfeet, and you [123]